

Beliefs of Teacher Candidates' Parents towards Teaching as a Profession

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to explore parents' beliefs towards the teaching profession. The sample consists of 51 parents of teacher candidates in a teacher training institute. A research instrument, using questionnaires, adapted from FIT-Choice scale, was used to collect data from the population. Although the results of this study must be interpreted with caution, the findings indicated that parents, in general, have positive attitudes towards the teaching profession. They perceived teaching as a career highly valued by society. Though the teaching job was viewed as difficult and requiring high expertise, the salary received was commensurate with their hard work and heavy workload. In terms of gender, male and female parents did not differ in their beliefs about the teaching profession. However, results indicated that educational attainment and income level had significant effect on parents' beliefs on teaching as a profession. The findings of the study implied that teaching is still perceived as a well respected profession.

Keywords: Beliefs, teaching profession, parents, teacher candidates

INTRODUCTION

Maintaining high quality educational programmes for school children is a joint responsibility of both teachers and parents. The roles of teachers in schools and the role of parents at home need to be recognized as crucial in supporting the child's education.

Many teachers seem to want parents to have a positive attitude towards school and support the teachers' work (Lareau, 2000). This positive attitude can develop into a good parent-teacher partnership, which can bring beneficial outcomes to the children's education. Although every child has a legal right to an education, there should be cooperation with and in agreement between home and school. When parents work closely with teachers in school, school children tend to achieve more, stay in school

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longer and engage more completely (Anwar, 1998; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Sulaiman et al., 2004; Zakaria, 2011). Parents who are involved in the children's learning environment also have a greater influence on the child's education (Johnsen & Bele, 2013).

In order to ensure greater parental involvement in schools, parents need to identify themselves with the job specifications of teachers as well as to develop positive attitude towards the teaching job (Lee & Chen, 2013). If parents have positive attitudes towards the children's teachers, children are likely to think likewise as most of the time, children tend to adopt attitudes held by the adults they respect. So, if children sense parents consider teaching as a well-respected profession, they are likely to view it in a more positive manner themselves. By promoting a positive attitude towards the teachers, parents can help children gain enthusiasm for their scholastic journey and acquire a passion for knowledge and ultimately become life-long learners

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Parents, regardless of social class, gender and ethnic origin want their children to succeed in school and achieve good results (Epstein, 2001). Therefore, there is a need to build a bridge between home and school. According to Moulton (2014), building a positive bridge between home and school is a win-win situation. The bridge between home and school would also enable teachers to utilize the knowledge and

experience children learnt from home into the actual teaching and learning process in the classroom. However, for effective teaching and learning to take place, parents would need to agree that teachers play an important role during the transition process. The beliefs that parents hold on the teaching role is important.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the beliefs of parents of Sarawak origin towards the teaching profession. Numerous studies have investigated the perceptions of various parties such as students, teachers, student teachers towards teaching but very few explored the views of parents. As parents are one of the main clients benefiting from the educational services rendered to their children, it is important to explore their views and obtain their feedback. Their views on the attitudes towards the profession can greatly influence their view about the quality of education provided by local teacher training institutes in Malaysia.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study was conducted to examine the parents' views regarding the teaching profession. Specifically, it aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of parents of teacher candidates regarding the teaching profession?
2. Is there a significant difference in beliefs between male and female parents of teacher candidates towards the teaching profession?

3. Is there a relationship between beliefs towards the teaching profession and parents' educational attainment?
4. Is there a relationship between beliefs towards the teaching profession and parents' income?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous past studies have been conducted on beliefs about the teaching profession on students, pre-service teachers, teacher candidates and teachers (Hamdan et al., 2006; Richardson & Watt, 2006; Ozbek et al., 2007; Dogan & Coban, 2009; Ozsoy et al., 2010; Dundar, 2014). Most of studies revealed that teaching was perceived as a career that did not command high respect or high status in society. Parents too, do not regard teaching as a high status profession. In a study conducted by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2015) on perceptions of the status of teachers, parents accorded high status, not to teaching but to doctors, lawyers, diplomats, pilots and architects. In fact, teaching was not featured as a high status profession or occupation in all the 12 focus groups ranging from 12 year old students intending to go into tertiary study, through to parents of tertiary students, and business career influencers.

However, many agreed that teaching requires a high level of expert, technical and specialized knowledge (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Lin et al., 2012; Dundar, 2014). These studies also perceived teaching as hard work, with heavy workload and is an emotionally demanding

and challenging career. In terms of salary, teaching was considered a career that was not well-paid (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Dundar, 2014). According to Richardson and Watt (2006, p.46), teaching is 'high in demand but low in return.'

In relation to differences between male and female's beliefs towards teaching, past studies have revealed that female respondents held more positive attitudes towards teaching than their male counterparts (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Dogan & Coban, 2009). Females are often perceived as more closely aligned to the teaching profession due to the common perception that teaching is typically perceived as a female profession (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). However, in the study conducted by Dundar (2014), there is no significant difference in perceptions between male and female respondents towards the teaching profession. The findings of the study revealed that male and female respondents did not differ in their beliefs pertaining to expertise needed in the profession, social status of the profession and salary received. On the contrary, the same study reported that there was a significant difference in gender in terms of perception towards difficulty of the teaching job. In the study, female respondents perceived the job to be more difficult than their male respondents.

The socioeconomic status of parents is an important variable to consider when investigating perceptions towards the teaching profession. Studies have reported that parental income was related to attitudes

towards teaching. Ozbek et al. (2007) found that low income earners held a more positive attitude towards teaching than high income earners. On the contrary, in the study conducted by Dogan and Coban (2009), Eren and Tezel (2010) and Dunder (2014), there is no significant relationship between parental income and perceptions towards the teaching profession. The perceptions of parents who have low income were found to be similar to those whose parents earned a higher income

Past studies revealed that parental education attainment also has no impact on their perceptions towards the teaching profession (Dogan & Coban, 2009; Eren & Tezel, 2010; Dunder, 2014). Maternal and paternal education attainment has similar beliefs towards the teaching job.

METHOD

Research Design

This study aimed to investigate parents' beliefs towards the teaching profession. The researcher employed a quantitative research methodology to address the predetermined research questions of the study. Among the quantitative methodologies available, a survey method was used to obtain responses from the parents who participated in the study.

Population and Sample

The population of the study is comprised of parents of teacher candidates who accompanied their children to sit for a pre-requisite examination held at one of the

teacher training institutes in Sarawak. Out of the total number of 250 parents, a sample of 51 respondents was randomly picked to take part in the survey. Based on this sample of 51 parents, 49% were males ($n=25$) and the remaining 51%, females ($n=26$) with ages ranging from 37 to 60 years (mean = 47 years; $SD = 5.61$). The majority of them (71.4%) had at least secondary education while 4% have some primary education or none at all. The educational attainment for the remaining population has either completed a college diploma (6.1%) or a university degree (18.4%). In relation to income earned, there was a wide range from zero income to a high income of RM6000 per month (mean = 2889.60; $SD = 2100$).

Instrument

The research instrument used to collect data for this study was adapted from FIT-Choice scale originally developed by Richardson and Watt (2006) which is comprised of 14 statements to investigate parents' beliefs towards the teaching profession. Each statement is scored on a seven-point Likert-type scale with a score of 1 indicating complete disagreement with the statement and a score of 7 to indicate complete agreement. To determine the internal reliability of the 14 statements used to measure beliefs towards the teaching profession as well as to determine the suitability of the research instrument for use in the Malaysian education setting, Cronbach's Alpha coefficients of reliability were derived. The result of the reliability test indicated the items achieved an overall

Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of .89 indicating that the scale used was highly reliable for use in the Malaysian setting.

Procedure

Before the research instrument was administered, the parents were briefed on the purpose of the study and informed consent to participate in the study was sought. After receiving their verbal consent, the research instrument, which was designed using structured self-administered questionnaires, were distributed to the target population of the study. During that period, the researcher was present to clarify doubts or difficulties in responding to the items in the questionnaires. The completion of the questionnaire took about 10-15 minutes and a total of 51 answered questionnaires were received.

Data Analysis

The data was analysed quantitatively using SPSS for Windows. Statistical analyses such as descriptive statistics, were used to analyse the data. Among the descriptive statistics used were frequency distribution, measures of central tendency and measures of variability. Mean scores were calculated and standard deviation was used to measure variability. Inferential statistics such as independent samples *t*-test was used to determine if there was any statistically significant differences in beliefs between male and female parents towards the teaching profession whereas Pearson Coefficient Correlation were used to determine relationships between

beliefs and parental income and educational attainment investigated in the study.

RESULTS

This study was conducted to investigate the beliefs of the parents of teacher candidates' towards the teaching profession. It should be emphasized that the results of the study must be interpreted with caution due the inherent bias in investigating the views of parents whose children aspire to become teachers.

Beliefs of Parents towards the Teaching Profession

The results of the analysis of parental beliefs towards the teaching profession are displayed in Table 1. Among the four categories of beliefs, parents strongly agree that the teaching profession has high social status ($M = 6.02$, $SD = 0.77$). They believed that teachers are professionals, have high morale and are valued by society. Based on the data received, parents also perceived teaching as a well respected career or a high status occupation. However, this finding seems to contradict past studies where, generally, teaching was not considered a high status and well-respected career (Ozsoy et al., 2010; Dundar, 2014).

Next, the highest degree of agreement was seen in the expertise needed in the teaching profession. Parents of these teacher candidates agreed that teaching requires a high level of expert knowledge ($M = 5.84$, $SD = 0.90$). In order to perform effectively as teachers in this profession, they need not only high expert knowledge but high technical and high specialized knowledge

as well. The findings were found to be consistent with numerous related studies in the past (Hamdan, et al., 2006; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Lin et al., 2012; Dundar, 2014).

Table 1
Means and Standard Deviations for Beliefs on the Teaching Profession

Beliefs on the teaching profession	Mean	Std. Deviation
Expertise	5.84	0.90
Difficulty	5.34	1.31
Social Status	6.02	0.77
Salary	5.28	1.43
Overall	5.73	0.77

In terms of difficulty faced by teachers in the teaching profession, parents viewed that teaching is hard work ($M = 5.34$, $SD = 1.31$). They agreed that teachers have a heavy workload and the teaching job is emotionally demanding. Similar findings were also reported in studies conducted by Hamdan et al. (2006), Manuel and Hughes (2006), Watt and Richardson (2007), Lin et al. (2012) and Dundar (2014).

Although parents also agreed that teaching is a well-paid job and that teachers earn a good salary ($M = 5.28$, $SD = 1.43$), the degree of agreement was given the lowest ranking compared to the other three categories on belief. However, a review of literature indicated that teaching was considered a career that is not well-paid (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Dundar, 2014). According to Richardson and Watt (2006), teaching is 'high in demand but low in return' (p.46).

It is a positive finding that parents in the study considered teaching as a career highly valued by the society. Though the teaching job is viewed as difficult and requiring high expertise, the salary received commensurated with their hard work and heavy workload. The social standing of teachers is also not an issue with parents as teaching is still perceived to be a well-respected career.

Differences in between Male and Female Parents Beliefs towards the Teaching Profession

Table 2 displays the independent sample *t*-test results of male and female parents' beliefs towards the teaching profession. In comparison, female parents hold a more positive attitude towards the teaching profession than their male counterparts. Female parents perceived that teaching required high expert knowledge, has high status and is a well paid career. Past studies also revealed that female respondents held more positive attitudes towards teaching than males (Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Dogan & Coban, 2009). However, the findings of this study could not be established as the *t*-test results showed that there was no significant differences in beliefs between male and female parents towards the teaching profession. In a study on elementary school teachers, there was also no significant difference between male and female teachers' beliefs pertaining to expertise, social status and salary (Dundar, 2014). Hence, the findings of Dundar's study was partially confirmed by the findings of the present study.

Relationships between Parents' Beliefs towards the Teaching Profession with Educational Attainment

Table 3 displays the Pearson Correlation Coefficients between parents' beliefs towards the teaching profession with their educational attainment. Based on the data received, there is a significant negative relationship between parents' educational attainment with parents' belief that teaching is a difficult job at 0.05 level of significance. This implies that parents who possessed high educational attainment tend to perceive the teaching job as less difficult compared to those parents who did not achieve a high level of education. The fact that less educated parents found the teaching job

to be more difficult is an expected finding as they might not have the expertise and knowledge to help their children with the school work. Parents having difficulty helping their school-going children might perceive the teaching job as difficult.

The relationship between parents' educational attainment with beliefs pertaining to expertise, social status and salary were not statistically significant ($p > .05$). This finding is compatible with the results of previous related studies which revealed that parents' educational attainment also has no impact on perception towards the teaching profession (Dogan & Coban, 2009; Eren & Tezel, 2010; Dundar, 2014).

Table 2
Independent Sample *t*-test of Beliefs on the Teaching Profession by Gender

Beliefs about the teaching profession	Male (n=25)		Female (N=26)		t	df	Sig
	M	SD	M	SD			
Expertise	5.65	1.01	6.01	0.76	1.437	49	.309
Difficulty	4.97	1.38	5.69	1.15	2.026	49	.306
Social Status	5.89	0.85	6.15	0.68	1.239	49	.221
Salary	5.22	1.38	5.35	1.50	.312	49	.828
Overall	5.55	0.89	5.91	0.60	1.712	49	.087

Table 3
Pearson Correlation Coefficient between parental beliefs towards teaching profession with educational attainment and income

Beliefs towards teaching profession	Educational Attainment	Income
Expertise	.105	.061
Difficulty	.387*	.261
Social Status	-.125	-.329*
Salary	-.183	-.069
overall	.064	-.049

* correlation is significant at .05 level (2-tailed)

Relationships between Parental Beliefs towards the Teaching Profession with Income Level

Table 3 also shows that there is a significant negative relationship between income level and parental beliefs towards the teaching profession. Parents who earned a lower income perceived teaching as a high status profession. On the contrary, parents who earned a higher income tend to disagree that teaching is a well-respected career. This is also another expected finding because, generally, parents do not regard teaching as a high status profession. In a study conducted by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (2015) on perceptions of the status of teachers, parents accorded high status, not to teaching but to doctors, lawyers, diplomats, pilots and architects. In fact, teaching was not featured as a high status profession or occupation in all the 12 focus groups ranging from 12 year old students intending to go into tertiary study, through to parents of tertiary students, and business career influencers.

No significant relationship can be concluded in parents' income level with their beliefs on expertise, difficulty and salary ($p > .05$). Consistent to this finding were studies conducted by Dogan and Coban (2009), Eren and Tezel (2010), Dundar (2014). It was reported that there was no significant relationship between parents' income and perceptions towards the teaching profession. The perceptions of parents who have low income are similar to those whose parents earn a higher income. On the contrary, past studies have reported

that parental income was related to attitudes towards teaching. Ozbek et al. (2007) found that low income earners held a more positive attitude towards teaching than those from high income earners.

DISCUSSION

This study was conducted to explore the beliefs of parents of teacher candidates on teaching as a profession. It also aimed to find out if parents' gender, educational attainment and income level have any significant influence on their beliefs on the teaching profession. It is important to note that the conclusion drawn from this study must be interpreted with caution due the inherent limitation of investigating the views of parents of children who aspire to become teachers. This study did not look at parental involvement in children's career decisions although past studies have revealed that parents did exert some influence on the career decisions of their children (Downing & d'Andrea, 1994; Baykal & Altuntas, 2011). However the findings were found to be non-conclusive as past studies have also reported that parents did abstain or take a neutral stand with regard to the children's career decisions (Taylor et al., 2004). In view of the inconclusive findings, the conclusion drawn from the study should be of interest and concern to all stakeholders in the educational profession.

Several implications can be deduced from these findings. Stereotypical perceptions of the teaching profession as a whole and of the roles of the teachers must be corrected through existing channels

provided by the Education Ministry and the availability and accessibility of the social media today. Parents perceived teachers as professionals who possessed high expert knowledge and skills to educate their children. The social standing of teachers is also not an issue with parents as teaching is still perceived to be a well-respected career. It is important to acknowledge that despite the low level of status accorded to teachers from previous studies (Ozsoy et al., 2010; Dundar, 2014), parents in this study do respect and admire teachers and the teaching job.

As parents possess positive beliefs towards the teaching profession, it also implies that they have positive attitudes towards their children's teachers. Consequently, children are likely to develop positive attitudes towards their own teachers too as children tend to adopt attitudes held by the adults (parents) they look up to. Hence, children of parents who considered teaching as a well-respected profession are likely to view it in a positive manner too. By promoting a positive attitude towards their school teachers, parents have indirectly helped children to gain enthusiasm and passion in their quest for knowledge for their scholastic journey.

In considering the positive beliefs of parents about the teaching profession, recruitment of future teachers would not be a major problem. This is because parents are often viewed as the determining factor in influencing the children's career decisions (Baykal & Altuntas, 2011). If the views of parents remained positive about the teaching

profession, they would be able to promote teaching as a positive career choice to their children in order to encourage them to take up this valued and respected profession.

Studies on parental views on the teaching profession are sparse. The limited and unavailability of national and international studies on this issue posed some limitations in the discussion of the findings. Nevertheless, this study has added new knowledge on the perceptions of teaching and teachers from parents' of teacher candidates. Consequently, this study has contributed to the existing body of knowledge in this area.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the beliefs of teacher candidates' parents regarding the teaching profession and data were collected from a small sample in one of the teacher training institutes in Sarawak. Thus, as the sample size is small, the findings of this study need to be confirmed by future research involving a larger or different samples of parents of teacher candidates. Additionally, instead of investigating only parents of teacher candidates' beliefs, future researchers can also examine the views of parents of children from various professions. Nevertheless, in view of the constant revision of educational policies as well as changes in people's beliefs, similar studies need to be conducted repeatedly to better understand the parents' views of the teaching profession. As one of the stakeholders in education, parental views and feedback can provide reliable and useful information to improve future educational

programmes and to strengthen the quality of education in the country.

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