

## **English Language Teaching as a Career in Nepal: Social Motives and Drives**

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### **Abstract**

*Research on teacher motivation has developed and expanded since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> the century and now there is a considerable increase in literature in the areas of teacher motivation research. A number of research studies have been conducted to gain insights into pre-service and in-service teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as a career. This study aimed at exploring the social motives and drives that force individuals to opt English language teaching as a career. It also aimed at investigating perceived satisfaction level of the participants. Five teachers of English who have been teaching English at different levels of education in Nepal for twelve years now participated in this study. The narrative inquiry approach was adopted as a research design for this study. Interview was used as a method for data collection. The study revealed that social motives, beliefs and individual desires are integral for choosing English language teaching as a career in Nepal. The love for the subject, the social prestige the English teachers deserved and the passion for teaching are some of the dominant reasons regarding why individuals chose ELT as careers in Nepal. Another frequently highlighted reason for career choice among teachers was a desire to work with children and adolescents. They think that the career as an English teacher also provides them with the opportunity to make a social contribution. So, altruistic motivations are highlighted as one the important reasons for deciding to choose English teacher as a career in Nepal.*

**Keywords:** Social motives; Drives; Career choice; Job satisfaction; Social contribution

### **Introduction**

If a person is willing to do something for intrinsically or extrinsically, then he or she is said to be motivated. Motivation drives one to do something for some internal and external reasons. Motivation can be defined as "a drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (Harmer, 2007, p. 51). For Brown (1994), motivation is "a term that is used to

define the success or the failure of any complex task" (p.152). Motivation is thought to be responsible for "why people decide to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it" (Dornyei, 2001, p.8). Ryan and Deci (2000, p.54) state that "to be motivated means to be moved to do something". The reasons for deciding to become teachers are intrinsic, extrinsic and altruistic. These motivations have been highlighted as the most important groups of reasons for deciding to teach (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992). The recent research works on teacher motivations have concluded that the reasons for the choice of a teaching career founded on expectancy-value theory (Richardson & Watt, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2007). Identifying which motivations relate to teacher engagement, commitment and persistence is a critical next step in light of workforce issues and pressures to understand the factors and processes underlying teacher quality (Watt & Richardson, 2008).

The motives for choosing English language teaching as a career are many. Understanding and identifying teacher trainees' reasons and motivations deciding to become teachers seem to be crucial for teacher educators (Bruinsma & Jansen, 2010; Mansfield, Wosnitza, & Beltman, 2012; Richardson & Watt, 2005). Motivations for choosing English teaching as a career have attracted considerable attention in recent years, and several research studies have been carried out to investigate pre-service and in-service teachers' reasons for entering teacher education programmes. Research studies mainly reveal three basic types or categories of motives for selecting teaching as a career: i) extrinsic motives such as salary, lengthy holidays; ii) intrinsic motives such as interest, personal experience, and intellectual fulfillment, and iii) altruistic motives as wanting to contribute to the growth of another individual (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992, Richardson & Watt, 2005; Rinke, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2008).

Although there is a huge number of research studies on teacher motivation in the field of general education, there are a few studies carried out on English language teachers' motivation for their career choice. Dornyei (2001, 2003) has also pointed out the scarcity of research on language teacher motivation. Research studies on second language teacher motivation have not offered a comprehensive picture of why individuals choose second/foreign language teaching as a career. So, the present study aims to unpack individuals' motivations and drives to choose ELT as careers in Nepal.

### **Theoretical Grounds**

The section reviews theories of motivation including factors influencing career choice and previous studies on choosing ELT as a career.

**Factors influencing teaching choice (FIT-Choice).** In the 21st century, knowledge has become the highest value commodity worldwide. With this reality, many countries have developed strategies to "carefully plan appropriate investments in human capital" (Kefela, 2010, p. 68) to improve their competitiveness. Developing countries, such as Brazil, China, Poland, Turkey and South Africa, initiated certain education reforms in order to become active players and to sustain their economic growth. As part of these reforms, teacher quality and education has become a hotly debated issue since research has affirmed that teacher quality is the most important factor associated with student performance (Darling-Hammond, 2000).

We have seen several theories of motivation. Theories of motivation have been developed since 1950s. One of the earliest ones is Super's Self-concept Theory (1953) which drew upon the role of individuals' perception of self in choosing a career (Topkaya, 2012). According to the theory, the question "Who I am?" is a key factor that plays a significant role in individuals' choosing a profession. Holland (1959), on the other hand, named this factor as "self knowledge" and claimed that a good occupational choice depends not only on individuals' accurate self-knowledge but also on accurate occupational knowledge (Topkaya, 2012). In addition to these, Bandura (1986) considers self-efficacy as an important source of motivation in decision-making process. Johnson (1986, p. 55) states that there are three theories of motivation namely expectancy theory; equity theory and job enrichment theory. The expectancy-value theory suggests that the expectations of success and the subjective value of the task are major determinants of motivation for academic choices as well as career choices (Richardson & Watt, 2005). Equity theory is based on the idea that individual's motivation level always correlates with his/her perception of equity, fairness and justice practiced by the management. Job enrichment involves motivating employees where a job is designed to have interesting and challenging tasks which can require more skill and can increase pay. According to Sinclair (2008) the prospective teachers are multi-motivated. Watt and Richardson (2007) used a comprehensive scale named Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice). The scale heavily relied on the expectancy-value theory. They conducted the study with pre-service teachers enrolled in three Australian universities and found that perceived teaching abilities, the intrinsic value of teaching and the desire to make a social contribution were the highest rated motivations.

**Career choice and change.** People usually choose a particular career when it offers higher salaries, clearer pathways for career development, greater social prestige, and more agreeable working conditions (OECD, 2005; Ramsay, 2000). Still in many of the developing nations teaching does not satisfy these conditions. With increasing shortages of teachers there has been a renewed interest in developed nations like the U.K., the United States, Europe, and Australia (OECD, 2005, as cited in Watt & Richardson, 2008). There has been a growing interest in many of the developing nations in Asia in understanding what motivates people to choose teaching as a career and what motivates them to persist the job. By far the largest number of studies of teacher motivations has been conducted in the United States. The studies are mostly based on surveys. The results showed that the reasons for choosing teacher as career are: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic (Watt & Richardson, 2008). Over the last five decades there has been a growing interest in teacher motivation research in Asia. Many of the research conducted up until the early 1990s suggested that "altruistic, service-oriented goals and other intrinsic motivations are the sources of the primary reasons for why they chose teaching as a career" (Brookhart & Freeman, 1992, p. 46). Reports say that teacher candidates choose to become teachers because they have a desire to work with children and adolescents. They love to help the children. This is one of the highly influential reasons in attracting people into a teaching career (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Some other studies conducted in countries such as Brunei, Zimbabwe and Jamaica have found that more extrinsic motivations such as salary, job security, and career status are important reasons for choosing a career in teaching (Watt & Richardson, 2008, p. 409). Motivations for career choice, satisfaction and persistence are framed and shaped by different sociocultural contexts as well.

In societies in some Asian countries career success is measured by salary, career prestige, and social status. So, people decide to change the job and enter the job that provides personal satisfaction and rewards. Some also look for the chances of making a social contribution when they change or take up a new career. In these societies and countries a desire to keep learning, is often seen as an “implausible choice” (Cr., 1990, as cited in Watt & Richardson, 2008, p. 409). Among younger workers there is now an embedded assumption that they will change their career several times over the course of their working lives. They change their professions as they find many options in the labour market. Mainly generations X and Y have very different options and are not likely to “fallback” on teaching due to a lack of career options to suit their talents and skills (Birrell & Rapson, 2006, as cited in Watt & Richardson, 2008). English learners in Nepal do not have ready access to using English as a tool of communication during their daily lives outside the classroom. This means that the learning and teaching occurs mostly in classrooms rather than during daily communication.

### **Research Questions**

This study aimed at exploring out individuals’ motives and drives for choosing English language teaching as a career. The study addressed the following questions:

1. Why do individuals choose ELT as a career in Nepal?
2. How do individuals grow as teachers of English?
3. Are English teachers satisfied with their jobs? To what extent?
4. What social contributions do teachers of English make?
5. What obstacles do teachers of English face in their lives?

### **Method**

This study adopts a narrative inquiry method to examine the teachers’ voice regarding how they become English teachers. According to Clandinin and Connelly (2000), narrative inquiry captures personal and human dimensions of experience over time, and takes account of relationship between individual experience and cultural context. Narrative researchers collect data about people’s lives and construct meanings with the help of their experiences. In narrative research designs, researchers describe the lives of individuals, collect and tell stories about people’s lives, and write narratives of individual experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). According to Creswell (2016, p. 502), narrative research can be defined as “a distinct form of qualitative research, a narrative typically focuses on studying a single person, gathering data through the collection of stories, reporting individual experiences, and discussing the meaning of those experiences for the individual”. Narrative inquiry is the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies) and reporting that kind of research (Schwandt, 2007, p. 204). Narrative research is the study of the lives of individuals as told through the stories of their experience, including a discussion of the meaning of those experiences for the individual.

**Research participants.** Five English teachers took part in this study. They shared very similar sociolinguistic characteristics in terms of age, English proficiency, exposure to other languages, and the like. All the speakers were native speakers of Nepali. They also have experience of teaching English at levels of education of Nepal. Three of them are university teachers while two of them are teaching at secondary level schools for ten years now. They

also work in different private colleges affiliated to Tribhuvan University as part time lecturers. The participants were purposively selected as this is a narrative inquiry. Some of them worked as part time English teachers while they were doing their master's degrees in English education at Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu. All the participants are males and their ages ranged between 30 and 40. All the participants are from outside of Kathmandu. Regarding their academic qualifications, they all have earned M.Ed. in English education from Tribhuvan University, Kathmandu, Nepal.

**Research tools.** Interview served as main method for data collection. After guidelines were prepared, the researcher visited the participants selected for this purpose. The questions focused on broad areas such as reasons why individuals chose English language teaching as a career, obstacles the teachers of English come across in their lives, professional development activities English teachers adopt to enhance their competence and efficiency. As they were interviewed their narratives were recorded using a mobile phone. The obtained data were analyzed thematically and descriptively. Thematic analysis is used in qualitative research and focuses on examining themes within data. Thematic analysis is one of the most common forms of analysis in qualitative research.

Interviews with five participants were conducted. Various topics related to the participants' experience on life as English teachers were covered. To elicit information, interviews were carried out as informal conversations to ensure a relaxed atmosphere so that more real-life stories could be extracted. Some open-ended questions prepared for this purpose were: Why and how did you become an English teacher? Why did you choose this profession? Who inspired you? What professional development activities do you adopt? To what extent are you satisfied with the job? What are your job responsibilities? They were also asked to describe their involvement in community of practice, relationship with other teachers, overall teaching/learning environment in their work places, their overall perceptions towards teaching of English.

## **Results and Discussion**

Data obtained from interviews were analyzed qualitatively. These data were analyzed and interpreted descriptively. All the three respondents were codified as T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5 for this study. The section is organized under the following sub headings: ELT as a Career: Social motives and drives, the way individuals grow as English teacher, social contributions, social beliefs and present scenario and hindrances.

**ELT as a career: Social motives and drives.** Social and individual reasons are dominant with regard to the choices of career in Nepalese society. Social motives, beliefs and individual desires are integral regarding choosing English language teaching as a career in Nepal. One of the participants reported "Teaching is my favorite profession. It is my passion too. What I adore is standing in front of enthusiastic pupils and delivering something. This passion led me to adopt teaching as a profession." It seems that individuals adopted this profession as they have passion for teaching. Their choice of profession was also guided by their parents. "I chose to become a teacher of English as my father was a good teacher of English and he encouraged to learn English and go for his profession", one of the participants (T2) said. Similarly, their choices of career as English teachers were influenced by their prior English teachers. This reason validates the conclusion made by Pandey (2020) in one of his

studies. Pandey (2020) claims “Role model English teachers were the mostly mentioned sources of inspiration to choose ELT as a profession for the participants in this study” (p.112). Participants were inspired by their prior teachers. Their teachers of English were role models, and the participants in this study wanted to adopt the profession. Intrinsic career value’ and ‘love for the subject matter itself were the other most frequently mentioned reasons why individuals chose language teaching as a career. According to Pandey (2020, p.112), “They chose teaching as the profession deserved prestige and respect.” Teachers of English get name and fame in the society. T1 (Kamal) said: Becoming a teacher of English was not my compulsion rather it was my passion. In my childhood I had a kind of passion to become a teacher of English and get good name and fame in my life. They came up with the idea that village teachers were respected and everybody greeted them. So, they decided to be like those. Another important reason to choose to become a teacher of English was the hardworking and inspiring personalities of English teachers at their school ages. T2 (Ramesh) had a similar opinion regarding why he chose ELT as profession. He said: “My decision to become an English teacher was not by chance but by choice. It was the direct result of having wonderful teachers of English and supportive parents who always motivated me to get higher education.” They inspired him to achieve his dream and aspiration through education. He further said “I was lucky to have many passionate teachers in my childhood who boosted my love for English. Indeed, I was extremely influenced by one of my English teachers who taught me English at college. His excellent English with native-like accent attracted me to be like him.” The stories of teacher participants tell us that their career choices were guided by role model teachers of English, and the intrinsic values like passion and interest.

**Life style of English teachers.** All the participants studied English from grade four. They passed their SLC examinations from state owned schools. So their English starts from grade four. T3 studied English from grade four as other participants did. Mr. Shrestha taught him English for the first time as an English teacher. Though he studied English for the first time, he didn’t feel any difficulty in English because of child friendly techniques of teaching. He still remembers the way he had been taught. He used to encourage him to learn English. He said: “He used to employ many techniques to motivate us. He involved the students in classroom interaction. His methods of teaching English motivated me in learning English.” He remembers and appreciates his teacher in the following way. T3 continued: “He taught us English from grade four to grade seven. I along with my other classmates liked him very much because of his good teaching techniques. I was too much impressed by his personality and his teaching style. There grew feeling of becoming teacher of English in my mind like him. Later on, there grew a keen interest in English subject.” Even the affection showed by the students in their initial years made them continue this profession. T4 stated: “the affection and respect the students showed towards him also attracted me to this profession. Besides, life style and encouraging words of their teachers at different stages life motivated them to select ELT as a career. “The life styles, encouraging words of my professor and his pat on back are still vivid in my mind” one of the participants reported. The participants’ stories show that their choices were influenced by their teachers’ lifestyle, teaching techniques and the inspiring behaviours of English teachers.

**Perceived level of satisfaction.** People usually consider teaching as implausible choice. English teachers have chosen this profession by their own choice. They have taken up this

profession as they have passion for teaching. They love the language and they love the profession. They enjoy learning how children learn. So, teachers are satisfied with their jobs and positions they hold. They think that they have chosen right jobs. They have been teaching English at universities and schools for ten years now. T2 said: "I love the profession because it provides me with opportunities to work with young people every day." The participants found the job satisfying as they are helping people to learn. I taught in high school for a year. They think the the job they have chosen is wonderful because they get admired by so many young students.

They get enough time to spend with their family and friends as they are teaching students at university level. "The most important thing is you remain updated" T2 said. "They are fully satisfied with the job as they get lot of opportunities to visit different places home and abroad, to take part at conference, to brush up their professional efficacy and personal experience"(Pandey, 2020, p. 114).

It can be concluded from the narratives that teachers of English are satisfied with the job they have undertaken. The most satisfying thing they find in their professions is that they can help the adults learn (Pandey, 2020). They can help pupil lean. They can help people grow. At the same time, they are admired by people. That is, they can contribute to the development of other individuals. The desire to become teachers here is guided by the altruistic motives. These motives give them satisfaction as they can contribute to the growth of other individuals.

**Social contributions.** Teachers should keep abreast of the new changes in their field of education and language teaching (Pandey, 2020). They need to continue learning to keep up-to-date with the constant development in the field of education. This type of learning is often referred to as professional development as it aims to enhance the teachers' professional competence and efficiency. With the help of the knowledge and skill they possesses, they prepare their students for different professions. Students are benefitted with their competence. Teachers give birth to different profession. Professionals are the pillars of the success of a nation. Teachers change individual to good citizens. Consequently, students become good social change agents. In addition, English is taught not as an end in itself but as a means to learn content areas such History, Geography, Mathematics etc., as well. English teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century do not only focus on developing language skills in students but also give emphasis on fostering a sense social responsibility in them so that students are aware of social issues and problems. With this awareness, English teachers produce socially responsible citizens and critical thinkers. This preparation and production serve the nation in many ways.

All the participants in this study have been teaching more than ten years. They have been teaching with zeal and enthusiasm. They believe that they have the similar kind of passion they had during their early days. Generally, they take 5/6 classes a day at graduate and undergraduate levels. They really enjoy their job. In this regard, T1 said: "My impression is good from the beginning of my profession as I show my honesty and dedication to my profession. I also have got lots of opportunities to refine myself in the profession. My desire to learn and teach has been fulfilled." In addition to teaching, they also have to supervise the students' thesis writing. Supervising researches of students provided them with a lot of

insights in the field of research. Most of the time, they remain busy in college for taking classes and correcting students' assignments and theses. Thus, they have been teaching with zeal and enthusiasm. They think that they are contributing to the society in many respects. They are respected and loved by everyone.

**Social beliefs.** Teaching is the most difficult job in the world as a teacher has to satisfy the hundreds of the students who have different mindsets, minds and attitudes (Pandey, 2020). A teacher has to be updated in each and every moment of life because in our society teachers are taken as role models. Teaching is a very dynamic profession. The way we teach and learn change year to year depending upon what we teach and the type of students we have. Nepalese classes we teach have remained the same for the last five decades. Our classrooms are still teacher-centred. The main challenge teachers have to face is that they have to abreast with the newest ideas of the subject they have been teaching. The life of a teacher is full of restrictions; they cannot do any wrong deeds in their life, they must be very cautious in each and every word they speak or write. This is because society considers the teacher as the most knowledgeable person among others, so a teacher cannot go against the social belief.

**Present scenario and hindrances.** Although English teachers are happy, they come across many obstacles in their lives. English Teachers have experienced many problems in their career. Some of them are classroom-related problems while others are management related. Teaching learning process does not match with paradigm shift in English language teaching. Even today students prefer traditional teacher fronted techniques to modern task based and content and language integrated instruction the Students assume that teachers are the possessors of the body of the knowledge. Large classes with mixed ability and multilingual learners, low level proficiency among the learners, incompetent teachers, lack of adequate resources in the institutions, inadequate and ineffective teacher education programmes are some other problems teachers often face. In addition, textbooks, curriculum, untrained teachers, and evaluation process are other policy related problems which hinder ELT in Nepal.

Society and instructions are not supportive to enhancing English language teaching process. English teachers do not easily avail resources to use in the classes. In some cases teachers do not get textbooks and support materials. In this connection, T4 said "it's been difficult for me to teach English due to the prevalent situational constraints." In addition, unnecessary political pressure in the university or school has made the teacher's job challenging. T1 further said "Teachers have been scapegoats of the society at present; the image of teacher is being ruined by some political teachers." Teachers have become more political than academic ones. To make the politicians happy teachers go against the professional ethics which has completely ruined the academic environment of the university. This kind of environment is unfavorable for those teachers who want to be really professional. Such kind of environment is not only seen in my university but it is widespread all over the nation. Schools, colleges or universities are engulfed by dirty politics. "There are no academic gossips in the staff rooms rather they are divided into different political poles and talk in support of their leaders blindly" (Pandey, 2020, p. 116). Many teachers spend their time flattering their political leaders. This horrible scenario of teaching profession may lead the nation towards failure. Political interference in the academic arena has become a great hindrance to development of professionalism in Nepal. Consequently, there is decrease in professionalism in the Nepalese



academia. This is one of reasons behind the increase of disrespect to teachers. Thus, overload, political interference in the academia, busy life and government's reluctance to improve the quality of education are some of the obstacles teachers of English face in their profession.

## **Conclusions**

Motivations for choosing English language teaching as a career have attracted considerable attention in recent years. The main aim of the study was to explore individuals' motives and desires to enter teaching of English. Five teachers of English teaching at different schools and colleges of Nepal took part in this study. Most noticeably, the motives for selecting English language teaching as a career are influenced by intrinsic career values and altruistic motives. They have chosen this profession as they like English and love the profession. Similarly, the desire to make a social contribution was one of the highly motioned reasons for deciding to become a teacher of English. Along with their passion to become teachers of English, they were also influenced by their parents and teachers. The factor 'prior teacher role model' was found to be dominant in choosing the profession. Teachers' life styles, behaviours, personality also equally influenced their career choice. It was also found that teachers are fully satisfied with their jobs. There are also some extrinsic factors as well that attracted them to become teachers of English. The social positions and the prestige their prior teachers deserved also attracted them to choose this profession. Thus, the motives to choose an English teacher as a career are guided by intrinsic and altruistic reasons.

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