# What motivates student teachers to undertake a PCET?

This action research project (ARP) investigates motivational factors leading students to undertake a Professional Certificate in Educational Training (PCET). 'Motivation is a key factor in successful learning' (Reece 2007) therefore research is needed on how student teachers today are motivated to aid 'governments and employing authorities to confront growing teacher shortages, attempt to improve teacher recruitment and reform initial teacher education and professional development' (Richardson 2007, p198).

ECPT6009 Action Research Project Caitriona Nelsey

## Introduction

In line with a study by Richardson (2007), this project aims to contrast and contextualize the entry motivations for current PCET students using the FIT Choice Model as a framework.

Research into student teacher motivations is relevant now as 'continuing and substantial numbers of qualified teachers leave the profession within five years' and staff retention is a longstanding problem in the UK's teacher workforce (Perryman 2020, p34).

Research into understanding and supporting student teacher motivations is essential for attracting and retaining talented educators who are committed to delivering high-quality teaching practices and promoting student success.

This project links with professional standards by 'using evidence informed approaches from research' to construct recommendations for future cycles of AR (V3 Advance HE 2011).

## Literature Review

A motive 'an outcome that has become desirable for a given individual' and there are many different motives for people to choose teaching as a professional career (De Cooman 2007; Jungert and Thornberg, 2014). Teachers must have sufficient motivation to teach to remain in the profession (Bas 2020).

Motivations for teaching are often categorised into different groups: **Intrinsic**, **Extrinsic** and **Altruistic**.

Although many studies have been carried out on the topic of motivation, 'research on teacher motivations has been relatively scarce' (Demir 2011, p145).

Understanding teacher motivation is key for the development of educational reforms, and the implementation of changes that arise from these (Perryman 2020). Teacher motivations studies are prevalent since COVID-19, as 'education systems have been identifying important reforms and better approaches to address the challenges faced by students, educators, and institutions' (Cambridge University 2023).

**FIT Choice Model**

Research into the choice of teaching as a career has typically been exploratory, involving opportune samples that are not representative of student teachers (Richardson 2007). The development of the theoretical model *Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice)* provided a comprehensive framework to guide systematic investigation into why people choose a teaching career (Glutsch 2019).

**Intrinsic Motivations**

These refer to the fulfilment of the job activity itself, the joy of teaching and learning, enjoying your subject area and wanting to go on to teach it (Simonsz 2023). These are the strongest incentive to achieve long-term objectives (CFI Education Inc 2024).

**Extrinsic Motivations**

External factors such as salary, status and job security can act as an effective stimulus to motivate a person to do a task he or she was not interested in previously' (CFI Education Inc 2024)

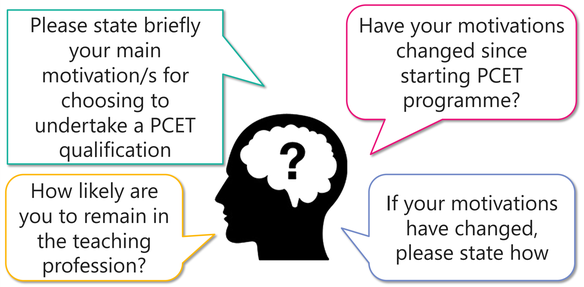
**Altruistic Motivations**

These centre around aspirations to help or bring advantages to others, wanting to help others learn, wanting to give back to society and wanting to influence others (Jungert 2014).

## Methodology

Action Research (AR) is a form of self-reflective inquiry and is the chosen methodology for this project (Carr and Kemmis 1986). Identifying **Intrinsic**, **Extrinsic** and **Altruistic** Motivational factors of PCET students was the primary objective for this research.

- Study Group = PCET Students, 2nd Year, UWTSD
- Sampling Method = Convenience Sampling
- Sample Size = 10 Respondents
- Research Method = Questionnaire
- Questionnaire Tool = Microsoft Forms (Linked to UWTSD accounts)
- Question Styles = Open-ended questions and Likert Scale Statements




| I chose to Undertake a PCET because… | Motivation Type |
|---|---|
| I have the qualities of a good teacher | Intrinsic |
| teaching is a career suited to my abilities | Intrinsic |
| I have always wanted to be a teacher | Intrinsic |
| teaching offers a steady career path | Extrinsic |
| I am interested in teaching | Intrinsic |
| teaching provides a reliable income | Extrinsic |
| teaching is a secure job | Extrinsic |
| teaching fits with the responsibilities of having a family | Extrinsic |
| teaching allows me to influence others | Altruistic |
| teaching allows me to provide a service to society | Altruistic |
| a teaching qualification is recognised everywhere | Extrinsic |
| as a teacher I will have lengthy holidays | Extrinsic |
| people have told me I would make a good teacher | Extrinsic |
| my current employer has asked me to gain the qualification | Extrinsic |
| it will improve my CV | Extrinsic |
| I want to help others to learn | Altruistic |
| I have a high interest in teaching my subject area | Intrinsic |
| I am interested in learning new things | Intrinsic |
| it will challenge and develop me further | Intrinsic |

Table 1. Questionnaire Likert Scale statements categorised by motivation type for undertaking a PCET.

## Results/Discussion

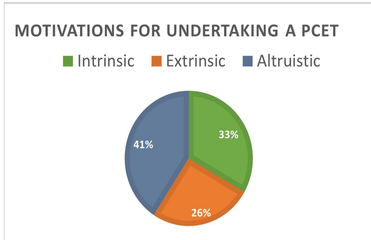
8 of 10 respondents completed the questionnaire. PCET students responded most agreeably with the Altruistic statements, followed by the Intrinsic and lasty the Extrinsic (Graph 1). This trend correlates with other FIT Choice Model studies (Glutsch 2019, Jungert 2014, Richardson 2007, Simonsz 2023).

**Teaching by Choice**

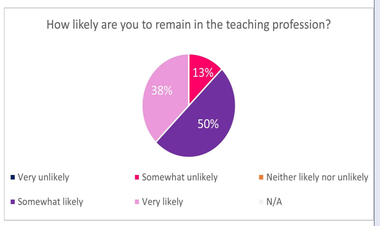
100% disagreed with statement 'teaching is a last resort career' demonstrating that 'teaching is a career of choice and not something that people fall back on when their other choices are not realised' (Richardson 2007, p197).

**Remain in Profession**

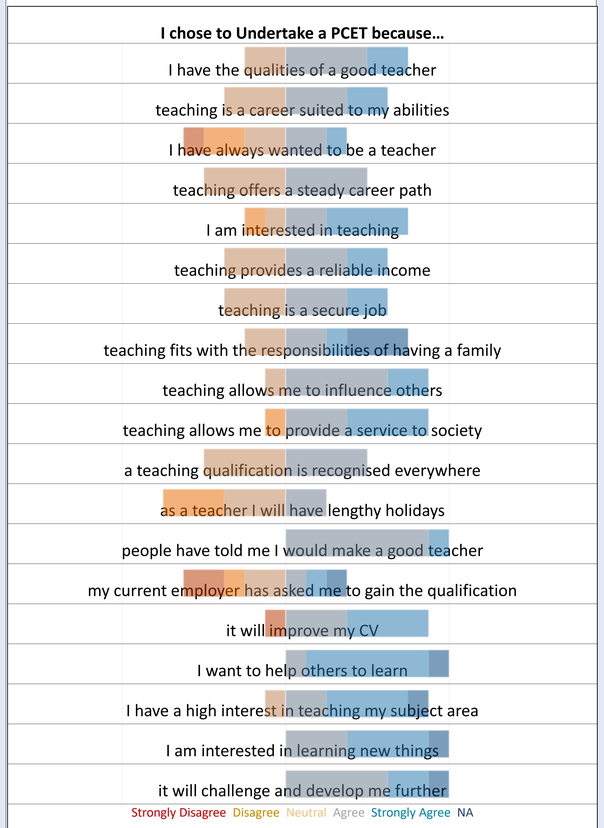
Graph 2 shows that even during initial teacher training, there is an ambiguity that could have future effects on staff retention and create problems with teacher shortages.




Graph 1. PCET student motivations from Likert Scale statements.




Graph 2. PCET student likelihood of remaining in teaching profession.




Graph 3. Questionnaire Likert Scale statements responses rated strongly disagree to strongly agree for motivations for undertaking a PCET

## Conclusion

This AR study suggests that the ideal combination for student teachers to undertake a PCET would be motivations related to intrinsic and altruistic factors. However, extrinsic factors such as job security and salary act as additional motivators to remain in the teaching profession once qualified (Struyven 2013).

Understanding and supporting student teacher motivations are essential for attracting and retaining talented educators who are committed to delivering high-quality teaching practices and promoting student success. This will have implications for 'teacher education planning and curriculum design, teacher recruitment authorities, and government and intergovernmental planning and policy decision' (Richardson 2007, p167).

Further studies are needed which could look to prevent problems such as teaching staff retention occurring or worsening (Alexander 2020). Further research would help education institutes and local authorities to meet their objectives in accordance with Wales Future Generations Act (FGW) (2015) to promote a more prosperous Wales and would 'acknowledge the wider context in which higher education operates' (V4 Advance HE 2011).

**Improvements for future cycles of AR**

Future AR cycles should ask PCET students at the start of the course what their motivations are for undertaking the course, and again at the end of the course to see how motivations change.

Future AR cycles repeating this research should have equal number of motivation type statements as in this study there were unequal amounts which could have skewed the data,

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