

EXPLORING EFL FRESHMEN'S MOTIVATION FOR CHOOSING A CAREER IN TEACHING ENGLISH: A CASE STUDY AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN HO CHI MINH CITY

English Language Teaching is growing rapidly in Vietnam. Therefore, understanding why students choose this career is very important to help universities support and develop future teachers. This study aims to explore the career motivations of freshmen in the English Pedagogy major at a public university in Ho Chi Minh City. It also examines whether gender and previous teaching experience create any differences in their motivations. The study used a quantitative method. Data was collected from 101 first-year students using a 25-item questionnaire based on the FIT-Choice framework. The collected data was then analyzed using SPSS software with descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and t-tests. The findings showed that Altruistic Motivation (wanting to help society) and Intrinsic Motivation (loving the English language) were the strongest reasons for choosing this major. On the other hand, Extrinsic Motivation, such as choosing teaching as a “fall-back career” (a backup plan), received the lowest scores. Furthermore, male students and students with prior teaching experience showed significantly higher levels of motivation. In conclusion, first-year EFL students proactively choose the teaching profession because of their true passion for English and a desire to contribute to society, rather than seeing it as a secondary option. These findings provide helpful evidence for universities to build better strategies to nurture students' passion for teaching.

Keywords: career motivation, FIT-Choice framework, EFL freshmen, pre-service teachers, English Pedagogy.

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