

INTEREST IN TEACHING AND PERCEPTION OF CONTROL AMONG STUDENT TEACHERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY

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Abstract

Student teachers' professional development in the twenty-first century is greatly influenced by their enthusiasm in teaching and sense of control. Perception of control boosts confidence in classroom management and instructional judgments, whereas interest in teaching increases motivation, engagement, and commitment. This study examines the relationship between these elements, emphasizing how resilience is fostered by persistent interest and how successful teaching is supported by a strong sense of control. The study highlights the necessity of teacher education programs that foster both intrinsic motivation and autonomy by looking at the experiences of student teachers. According to research, encouraging a love of teaching and increasing one's sense of control can result in teachers who are self-assured, driven, and successful, which will ultimately raise educational standards.

Keywords: *Interest in Teaching, Perception of Control, Student Teachers, Teacher Education, Motivation.*

Introduction

Student instructors' motivation and efficacy in the twenty-first century are greatly influenced by their interest in teaching and sense of control. Their enthusiasm and dedication are reflected in their interest in teaching, and their sense of control affects how confident they are in their ability to run classrooms and make instructional decisions. Self-efficacy is increased by a strong sense of control, which promotes resilience and involvement in the classroom. However, these elements may be impacted by classroom difficulties and academic demands, which may result in stress and disengagement. This study examines the relationship between perceptions of control and interest in teaching, emphasizing how these factors affect the professional development of student teachers. By better understanding this relationship, teacher education programs can be improved and future teachers will be equipped with the drive, self-assurance, and flexibility necessary to thrive in the rapidly changing educational environment of today.

Theoretical Framework

The study is grounded in two psychological theories:

i) Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), Self-Determination Theory (SDT) focuses on intrinsic motivation and how it drives individuals to engage in activities with enthusiasm and

persistence. According to SDT, human motivation is influenced by three fundamental psychological needs:

- Autonomy – The need to have control over one's actions and decisions.
- Competence – The need to feel capable and effective in performing tasks.
- Relatedness – The need to connect with others and feel valued.

In the context of teaching, interest in teaching aligns closely with SDT. When student teachers find joy and personal meaning in teaching, they experience greater engagement and satisfaction. If teacher education programs support autonomy, competence, and relatedness, student teachers are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation, remain committed to the profession, and adopt innovative teaching strategies. A lack of fulfillment in any of these areas can lead to disengagement, frustration, or even career burnout.

Autonomy is especially important in teacher training, as student teachers need opportunities to develop their teaching style and make instructional decisions. When they have the freedom to experiment and reflect on their practices, they gain confidence in their abilities. Competence is equally vital; when student teachers receive constructive feedback, mentorship, and hands-on experience, they feel more capable of handling classroom challenges. Relatedness, or the sense of belonging and support, comes from positive relationships with peers, mentors, and students, reinforcing their motivation to teach.

SDT suggests that when these psychological needs are met, student teachers experience intrinsic motivation, leading to greater persistence and professional satisfaction. Conversely, external pressures such as rigid curricula, high-stakes testing, or lack of support can undermine these factors, making it difficult for student teachers to sustain their enthusiasm for teaching. Teacher education programs must, therefore, create environments that foster autonomy, competence, and relatedness to ensure long-term motivation and engagement in the profession.

ii) Locus of Control Theory

Julian Rotter (1966) introduced the Locus of Control Theory, which explains how individuals perceive the causes of events in their lives. According to this theory, people can have:

- Internal Locus of Control – Believing that one's actions directly influence outcomes.
- External Locus of Control – Believing that external forces (luck, fate, or other people) determine outcomes.

In the teaching profession, perception of control is directly related to an internal locus of control. Student teachers who believe they can influence classroom dynamics, student learning, and their own professional growth are more likely to exhibit confidence, resilience, and effective decision-making. Conversely, those with an external locus of control may feel powerless and struggle with stress and burnout.

Interest in Teaching

- Interest in teaching is essential for maintaining enthusiasm and commitment in the profession. Several factors contribute to interest in teaching, including:
- Personal motivation and passion for education
- Positive experiences during teacher training
- Supportive mentors and role models

Engaging and interactive classroom environments Student teachers with a high level of interest are more likely to implement innovative teaching methods and sustain long-term engagement in their careers.

Perception of Control in Teaching

Perception of control influences a teacher's confidence in managing classrooms and instructional practices. It includes:

- Classroom management skills
- Decision-making autonomy
- Ability to adapt to student needs
- Confidence in handling challenges

A high perception of control enables student teachers to navigate uncertainties, while a lack of control can lead to burnout and dissatisfaction.

Challenges Faced by Student Teachers

Despite the importance of interest and control, several challenges hinder student teachers' growth:

- Heavy workload and academic pressures
- Classroom discipline issues
- Lack of mentorship and support
- Fear of making mistakes

Addressing these challenges through structured training and mentorship can enhance both interest and perception of control.

Strategies to Enhance Interest and Perception of Control

To support student teachers, teacher education programs should:

- Provide hands-on teaching experiences
- Foster collaborative learning environments
- Encourage reflective teaching practices
- Strengthen mentoring and peer support

By integrating these strategies, institutions can help student teachers develop confidence and sustain their enthusiasm for teaching.

Conclusion

Interest in teaching and perception of control are key factors in shaping student teachers' professional development. A strong interest enhances motivation, while a high perception of control fosters confidence and adaptability. Addressing challenges through targeted strategies can ensure that student teachers enter the profession well-prepared and motivated. Future research should explore long-term impacts of these factors on teacher retention and effectiveness.

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