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Teacher motivation from a goal content perspective: Beginning teachers' professional goals.

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Abstract

Viewing teacher motivation from a goal content perspective, this paper examines graduating and early career teachers' professional goals. Responses to an open-ended survey question by 332 graduating teacher education students and 162 early career teachers were analysed through a collaborative, inductive-deductive process. Participants nominated eighteen types of professional goals which were categorised as overarching personal, situated and career goals. Cohort differences reveal some statistically significant goal emphases at the graduating and early career stages. A framework is developed, *Beginning Teachers' Professional Goals*, which has potential future use for examining teachers' goals at particular career stages and contributing to our understanding of teacher motivation.

Keywords: teacher motivation, teacher goals, early career teachers, teacher retention

Highlights

- Development of a framework of *Beginning Teachers' Professional Goals* based on empirical data and teacher motivation literature.
- A goal content approach is used to examining beginning teachers' professional goals for teaching.
- Overarching goals for teaching are conceptualised as personal, situated and career goals.
- Provides a useful framework for understanding teacher motivation at the beginning teacher level.

1. Introduction

Recent research on teacher motivation has explored questions such as: why do individuals choose to become teachers (e.g., Richardson & Watt, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2007; Watt & Richardson, in this issue); what goals do they have for their teaching (Butler, 2007; Hagger & Malmberg, 2011; Mansfield, Wosnitza, & Beltman, 2012); and why do they stay in the profession (Hong, 2012; Hughes, 2012)? Such questions are important to better understand teacher motivation and retention, especially given the exodus of early career teachers in some contexts. The retention of early career teachers is a major concern for governments due to a lack of return on financial investments, potential future teacher shortfalls, concerns for the quality of students' learning (Borman & Dowling, 2008; Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006) and ongoing issues associated with teacher stress and burnout (Parker, Martin, Colmar & Liem, 2012). As the teaching profession meets the challenges of the future and endeavours to attract and retain high quality teachers, there is merit in further understanding aspects of teacher motivation, particularly of early career teachers, including the goals they strive for in their professional lives.

1.1 Teacher motivation in the early years

Examining the initial and ongoing motivation of teachers has become an important field of research. A key finding across a range of studies is that both pre-service and early career teachers have a strong intrinsic motivation to teach (Chong & Low, 2009; Guarino, et al., 2006; Richardson & Watt, 2010; Sinclair, 2008), although this may be framed differently in the different sociocultural contexts of different countries (Watt & Richardson, 2008; Watt et al., 2012). Sinclair (2008), for example, found that for prospective Australian teachers, highest intrinsic motivations were for working with children (e.g. enjoyment of working with children in other contexts), intellectual stimulation (e.g. love of learning or of a particular

subject), and self-evaluation (e.g. always wanting to be a teacher). Although significantly fewer than intrinsic, the highest extrinsic motivations for becoming a teacher were the nature of teaching work (e.g. creative, varied work and interesting colleagues), perceived working conditions (e.g. vacation time and job security), and perceived life-fit (e.g. compatible with home life and family demands). Similarly, Chong and Low (2009) explored why student teachers in Singapore chose to enter teaching. Primarily, they also entered the profession for intrinsic reasons (e.g. interested in teaching; love for their subject) followed by altruistic reasons (e.g. love of children; wanting to contribute to society). On leaving their program, although still positive, they became less so as they moved into their profession.

Watt and Richardson (2006) have used expectancy value theory to identify factors influencing the choice of teaching as a career. Such factors include intrinsic career values, perceptions of ability, personal and social utility values, prior experiences, social experiences, perceived task demand and viewing teaching as a fallback career. Their FIT-Choice model was initially developed using an Australian sample, but has also been used to explore teacher motivation internationally (Watt, Richardson, Klusmann, Kunter, Beyer, Trautwein, & Baumert, 2012). Richardson and Watt (2010) also found that motivations for teaching were generally stable from pre-service over the first five years of teaching. There were, however, differences between different subtypes of teachers, with the “highly engaged persisters” (those intending to spend most of their career in teaching) experiencing declining career satisfaction. These authors also suggested a gap between aspirations and reality as new teachers came face to face with the multiple demands of the profession.

Experiencing the realities of teaching has been proposed as a potential reason for changes in other motivational constructs. For example, Woolfolk Hoy and Burke Spero (2005) in a US longitudinal study of prospective and practicing teachers found that the teachers’ efficacy

increased during their pre-service preparations but dropped as they began to work as a new teacher. The authors hypothesised that novice teachers underestimated the complexity of teaching and were disappointed with the “gap between the standards they have set for themselves and their own performance” (p. 353). As pre-service teachers graduate and move into the profession there appear to be subtle changes in motivational constructs that warrant further exploration.

1.2 Teacher goals

To better understand teacher motivation, researchers have also investigated teacher goals. Goals have been described as subjective representations of what individuals would like to occur, or not to occur, in the future and these in turn act as important organisers for thoughts, emotions and behaviours (Ford, 1992; Schutz, Crowder & White, 2001).

One perspective used to examine teacher goals, is that of achievement goals. Achievement goals are concerned with the purpose of achievement related behaviour (Ames, 1992), the main two goals being mastery goals (to develop skills and competence) and performance goals (to demonstrate competence relative to others) (Ames & Archer, 1988). In the context of teaching, achievement goals represent the strivings teachers have for success in their job (Butler, 2007; Butler & Shibaz, in this issue; Retelsdorf, Butler, Streblov, & Schiefele, 2010) and have been associated with particular behaviours. Butler, for example, found that teacher mastery goals positively influenced teacher help seeking behaviour (Butler, 2007) and that goals to develop caring and close relationships with students predicted mastery focused instructional practices (Butler, 2012). Mastery goals have been shown to be adaptive goals for teachers and have been associated with classroom mastery goals, high levels of interest in teaching and low levels of burnout (Retelsdorf, et al., 2010). Papaioannou and

Christodoulidis, (2007) found that strong performance goals were associated with low levels of job satisfaction. Other studies have supported conceptualising teacher goals from an achievement goal perspective among practicing and pre-service teachers (e.g., Fasching, Dresel, Dickhäuser, & Nitsche, 2010; Nitsche, Dickhäuser, Fasching, & Dresel, 2011). Furthermore, both mastery and performance goals have been shown to have an approach (striving towards) and an avoidance form (striving to avoid) (Elliot, 1999; Ford, 1992) and this four factor model has been extended to teachers' achievement goals (Retelsdorf, et al, 2010). Furthermore, Kuscerá, Roberts, Walls, Walker and Svinicki (2011) have developed a scale to measure teachers' Goal Orientation Towards Teaching (GOTT), focusing on three orientations, learning, proving and avoiding. Associations between teachers' achievement goals and school goal structures have also been recently investigated (Cho & Shim, 2013). While achievement goals provide a useful lens with which to view teacher motivation, a sole focus on achievement goals may not account for some of the broader purposes for pursuing a teaching career as indicated in the teacher motivation literature.

In addition to achievement goals, the student motivation literature has benefited from a focus on the content of students' goals (Dowson & McInerney, 2003; Mansfield, 2012; Wentzel, 2000) and how they influence thoughts and behaviour. Although the content of teachers' goals, has received less attention, research in this field is steadily gaining momentum (e.g. Mansfield, et al., 2012). In a 1996 study, Lemos investigated teachers' spontaneously articulated goals, identifying seven goals (enjoyment, learning, complying, working, evaluation, relationship and discipline). Ng (2010) examined teachers' career goals, conceptualised as "teachers' perceived career-related purposes for learning engagement" (p. 401). Niikko and Ugaste (2011) investigated the goals of preschool teachers in Finland and Estonia, finding that teacher goals included goals for their children, for pedagogical activity and professional development. Hagger and Malmberg (2011) found that the content of goals

reflected “both the self (themselves, their health and their career progression), teaching tasks (skills and techniques), students (relationships with students, colleagues and community) and impact” (p. 607). Hagger and Malmberg also reported some associations between goals and wellbeing (measured through self-esteem and depression scales). There is evidence that goals have an important role to play in wellbeing (Salmela-Aro & Nurmi, 1997; Sheldon, Ryan, Deci, & Kasser, 2004) and therefore understanding teachers’ goals may be useful in promoting understandings about goals and wellbeing in the teaching profession.

Given the concerns regarding retention of early career teachers as they face the realities of the profession, one avenue of research to enhance our understanding is that of teachers’ professional goals. From the teacher motivation literature reviewed, it could be anticipated that early career teachers may have goals to improve the lives of their students, develop positive relationships with them, or to share an interest in a subject area. It could also be expected that teachers may pursue multiple goals and that there may be subtle differences between graduating and early career teachers as they face current challenges such as behaviour management and increased administrative loads (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011). The specific research questions for this study therefore, were:

- *What professional goals are pursued by beginning (graduating and early career) teachers?*
- *Are there differences between graduating teacher and early career teachers’ professional goals?*

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

As part of a larger research project on teacher resilience, graduating and early career teachers were invited to complete a survey (Mansfield, Price, McConney, Wosnitza, Beltman & Pelliccione, 2012). Participants were 332 graduating teachers from two universities and 162 early career teachers who completed a survey either in class or online.

The graduating teachers were from two universities in Western Australia. They were right at the end of either a four year undergraduate course to become early childhood, primary or secondary teachers, or of a one year graduate diploma course to become a primary or secondary school teacher. Researchers were staff at the universities but they had no responsibility for teaching or assessing the participating final year students. Students were invited to complete the survey online or during a regular class. Data relating to goals were available for 332 graduating teachers.

Early career teachers were invited to complete the survey online. Recent graduates from the two universities were contacted by email, and a general invitation was sent out in the newsletters of two teacher organisations. The survey was also available on the research project web site (www.keepingcool.edu.au). The 162 early career teachers who completed the goals for teaching section of the survey were all in their first, second or third year of teaching and had graduated from universities across Australia, with most from Western Australian universities. They were teaching across a range of subject areas, age groups and school contexts.

2.2 Survey

Participants responded to a broad survey regarding their perceptions of teacher preparation, efficacy and competence. The survey included an open-ended question designed to elicit participants' professional goals. Graduating teachers were asked: *“Considering your future career as a teacher what are your three major goals? Please list these in order of*

importance. Why are these goals important to you?” For early career teachers, the question was: “*Considering your career as a teacher what are your major goals? Please list these in order of importance. Why are these goals important to you?*” Three numbered boxes were provided in both surveys for participants to record their responses.

2.3 Data Analysis

Due to the intentionally open-ended nature of the survey question, responses included a broad range of goals. Participants were free to write a maximum of three responses to the question. All participants responded once, 90.5% responded twice and 73% responded three times. Table 1 shows the number of responses and percentage for each of the two groups.

INSERT TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE

Overall, the 332 graduating teachers gave 852 responses and the 162 early career teachers gave 450 responses, producing a total of 1302 responses available for analysis. As in a previous study (Mansfield, et al., 2012), participants had sometimes referred to more than one goal in a single response (for example, “*to enjoy my career and be the best teacher I can be*” graduating teacher, ID205). Where this occurred, the statement was coded according to two different goals (*experience positive emotions* and *develop teacher identity*). The coding system therefore allowed for multiple coding of responses to capture the full range of goals nominated, and a total of 1633 goals were analysed.

Two researchers independently and inductively coded a sample of 452 (40%) goals. The goals were deliberately named so as to reflect the dominant words and phrases found in

participants' responses, as shown in Table 2. After the first coding, full inter-rater agreement was 73%. The responses where full agreement was not reached were discussed and the coding system refined. These goals were then independently re-examined and full agreement was reached on a further 10%, making the final inter-judge full agreement 83%. The remaining goals were then discussed and agreement reached on their final coding. In this process the coding categories were further refined. In addition to the 1633 goals that were coded, there were 48 statements that were coded as "other" (including statements not responding to the question asked and statements with ambiguous meaning) and these were not included in the final analyses. Comparisons between coding categories and between participant groups were made using nonparametric chi-square (χ^2) tests (Gay, Mills & Airasian, 2006).

3. Results

3.1 What professional goals are pursued by beginning (graduating and early career) teachers?

Analysis of the 1633 goals revealed eighteen specific professional goals articulated by the beginning teachers. Table 2 indicates each goal, its definition, illustrative statements from the data, and the number and percentage of statements containing each goal. The goals are listed in order of the frequency with which they were nominated. It may be seen that there was a broad range of goals and that the most nominated only consisted of 14.5% of goals. The most commonly articulated goal (14.5% of all goals) was to gain employment in general or in particular contexts. The least nominated goal (1.3%) was of belonging to a community.

INSERT TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE

The next consideration was how the 18 individual goals may be grouped to reflect broader goals. The first step was to examine potential ways of grouping the 18 goals by identifying common themes. There were goals that were directed towards the individual, such as to ‘build confidence’, to ‘experience positive emotions’ and to ‘earn an income’. There were also goals that were particularly situated in the context of the profession. For example, the goals to ‘build positive learning environments’, ‘cater for diversity’ and ‘facilitate effective learning experiences’ all focused on aspects of pedagogy. Similarly, the goals to ‘continue professional learning’, ‘develop knowledge of content and curriculum’ and ‘develop specific teaching skills and processes’, all related to teachers’ further learning goals. A group of social relations goals such as to ‘build relationships’, ‘belong to a community’, ‘make a difference’, ‘be well regarded by others’ and ‘help students and other teachers develop’ was also evident. There were also goals with a career focus such as to ‘gain employment’, ‘develop a career path’ and ‘attain job security’. From the 18 specific goals, seven groups of broad goals emerged that related to: further learning, social relations, employment conditions, wellbeing, developing a positive sense of self, pedagogy, and career development. Table 3 indicates these broad goals in order of the frequency of their nomination. It may be seen that goals referring to further learning were the most frequently nominated by participants, and goals referring to career development the least nominated..

INSERT TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE

A final stage of analysis was to consider the goals at an even broader, overarching level of categorisation that would reflect aspects of teachers' work represented by the goals. The Ford and Nicholls (1987) framework was influential in this process as the seven groups showed both person focused goals and person-environment focused goals. Day and colleagues' (Day, 2008; Day, Sammons, Stobart, Kington & Gu, 2007) discussion of the professional, situated and personal dimensions of teacher identity also shaped the development of the overarching categories. At the broadest level of conceptualisation, three overarching categories emerged, those being, goals centred on the person (*personal goals*), goals enacted in the teaching situation (*situated goals*) and goals related to professional aspirations (*career goals*). Figure 1 shows the organisational structure for the three levels of all the nominated overarching, broad and specific professional goals. Also indicated in Figure 1 are the percentages of all goals nominated that were coded as personal, situated and career. Across both groups of participants, situated goals ($n=879$, 53.8%) were nominated significantly more frequently than either personal ($n=377$, 23.1%) or career ($n=377$, 23.1%) goals ($\chi^2(2, N = 1633) = 308.62$, $p < 0.001$). Even if the number of references to personal and career goals were combined, situated goals were still nominated to a significantly greater extent ($\chi^2(1, N = 1633) = 9.57$, $p < 0.01$). Despite the similarity between personal and career goal nominations, it may be seen that there were differences between the groups.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

3.2 Are there differences between graduating teacher and early career teachers' professional goals?

The second aim of the study was to examine differences between the professional goals of graduating and early career teachers. Due to the fact that participants were either at the point of transition into teaching, or were early career teachers, based on prior studies (e.g., Chong & Low, 2009) it was anticipated there may be some differences in the goals they reported at these different career phases. Table 4 indicates, for both graduating and for early career teachers, the percentages and number of goals coded within the three overarching categories (bold font in Table 4), the broad categories (bold and italic font), and the specific goals (plain font).

INSERT TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE

There were no differences between graduating and early career teachers in their overarching professional goals. As already indicated, situated goals represented the significantly highest percentage of nominated goals across all participants, followed by personal and career goals which were equally nominated. As shown in Table 4, both cohorts reported a similar percentage of goals in each overarching category, and chi-square tests revealed no significant differences between cohorts.

At the broad level of goals, chi-square tests indicated two significant differences between graduating and early career teachers (see Table 4). Of the overall number of 387 further learning goals, early career teachers stated a significantly greater proportion than graduating teachers ($\chi^2(1, N = 387) = 3.72, p < 0.05$). The second difference was that graduating teachers reported a significantly higher proportion of goals related to employment conditions ($\chi^2(1, N = 281) = 8.26, p < 0.001$), than did early career teachers.

At the level of specific goals, as seen in Table 4, there were four statistically significant cohort differences. As already indicated, at the broad level of goals, graduating teachers nominated a greater proportion of goals relating to employment conditions and within this category, they made significantly more references to the specific goal of gaining employment ($\chi^2(1, N = 236) = 8.26, p < 0.001$). However, also within this broad goal of employment conditions, early career teachers referred significantly more often to the specific goal of attaining job security ($\chi^2(1, N = 45) = 7.40, p < 0.05$), through, for example, achieving permanency in their position. Early career teachers also referred significantly more than graduating teachers to the specific goals of developing specific teaching skills and processes ($\chi^2(1, N = 145) = 11.72, p < 0.001$), and being able to better cater for diversity in their classrooms ($\chi^2(1, N = 38) = 5.80, p < 0.05$).

3.3 Other findings

In addition to investigating the three specific research questions, the data were also interrogated with respect to other aspects of goals prevalent in the literature. For example, the approach / avoidance distinction is important in the goals literature (Elliot, 1999; Ford, 1992). In this study, participants were not specifically asked about things they wished to avoid, yet participants' responses sometimes reflected avoidance goals when they explained why specific goals were important. In explaining what they hoped to avoid in their future teaching careers, the participants referred to avoiding negative emotions such as stress, burnout, anger and resentment, loss of passion, lack of enjoyment, and low job satisfaction. They also wanted to avoid unemployment and unfavourable employment conditions; deregistration; student boredom; job instability; and becoming boring, angry, resentful, grumpy and worn out. For example, the goal to "*be financially sound*" was important "*because it makes a big difference to stress levels*" (graduating teacher, ID50). Similarly the goal to enjoy teaching "*Enjoy my work*" was important to avoid leaving the profession – "*I won't continue my work*

if I don't enjoy it" (graduating teacher, ID178). A desire to maintain a positive approach to teaching "*To stay positive and enthusiastic*" was important, "*so that I am not a grumpy, worn out teacher*" (graduating teacher, ID253). One early career teacher said:

I want to obtain level 3 within my first 5-8 years ... I don't want to be stale and stagnate and I think that it is important that we always strive to continue learning and better ourselves. I don't want to settle into a pattern and become a mediocre teacher – by setting such a goal, I hope to ensure that I don't. (ID79)

Avoidance goals across all categories were extracted and compared across cohorts using chi-square tests. Of the 46 total avoidance goals reported, graduating teachers referred to avoidance goals significantly more often than early career teachers ($n_{GT}=37$; $n_{ECT}=9$; $\chi^2(1, N=46) = 4.00, p < .05$).

An interesting aspect of the relationship between goals pursued and avoidance goals was that they did not always reflect the same category. For example, the reasons given for career development goals were not solely to avoid career stagnation, but to avoid negative emotions such as boredom, anger and resentment, reflecting the goal category of developing a positive sense of self. One graduating teacher who had worked in the UK wanted "*To gain responsibility comparable to my UK position, so I don't get bored*" (ID219) and an early career teacher wanted additional responsibilities to avoid becoming resentful:

To become a level 3 teacher/administrator. This goal is important to me because I believe I have the skills and passion to take my teaching to another level. I don't just want to be a teacher who slowly becomes angry and resentful of the education system. (ID104)

4. Discussion

The first aim of the research was to determine the professional goals pursued by beginning (graduating and early career) teachers and a Beginning Teachers' Professional Goals framework has been developed. The overarching personal, situated and career goals were conceptualised using previous research on goals (Ford, 1992; Ford & Nichols, 1987) as well as more recent work concerning teachers' resilience, commitment and effectiveness (Day & Gu, 2010; Day, et.al, 2007). Situated goals, referring to goals enacted in the teaching situation, were by far the most highly nominated, indicating that these beginning teachers were focused on the immediate context of their anticipated or experienced work. At the broader level of goals, and within this overarching category of situated goals, further learning was the most frequent goal – incorporating ongoing professional learning, learning about content and curriculum, and the learning of specific skills and processes. This could indicate that the beginning teachers realised that they were indeed at the beginning of their careers and still had many things to learn before they could consider embarking on planning their future career pathway, as career development was the least nominated broad goal. It could also indicate that the participants in this study, as with previous research (Chong & Low, 2009; Sinclair, 2008), were intrinsically motivated or mastery focused (Butler, 2012).

Despite this wider focus on becoming what could be seen to be an effective, continually developing classroom teacher, the specific goal that was most frequently nominated was to gain employment in general or in particular contexts. This could perhaps be expected, given the career stage of the participants. It could also be related to the local Australian context where new graduates are typically able to find casual or relief work and achieving permanency in government schools may take time (Pietsch & Williamson, 2009). This finding points to a potential conflict for beginning teachers as they may have the intrinsic goal to develop, learn and create positive learning environments and relationships with their

students and colleagues. The current context for many beginning teachers, however, is one of casual or temporary employment or even waiting for such positions to become available, and so they find themselves also pursuing the more extrinsic goal of gaining employment or job security. As well as the “reality shock” and “shattered dreams” described in general as beginning teachers enter the profession (Friedman, 2004, p. 312), working as a casual teacher can provide additional challenges (Jenkins, Smith & Maxwell, 2009; McCormack & Thomas, 2005) including that of not being in a position to enact one’s main professional goals.

The second aim of the research was to determine differences between graduating teacher and early career teachers’ professional goals. With regard to the categories of broad overarching goals, there were no significant differences between cohorts. Some more specific cohort differences were identified, however, suggesting that particular goals for teaching may have more emphasis at different career stages. At the broad level of categories when both cohorts were combined, further learning was the most frequently nominated, but the early career teacher cohort nominated a significantly greater proportion of these than did the graduating pre-service teachers. Perhaps the ‘real world’ experiences, which can highlight gaps between hopes and reality (Richardson & Watt, 2010; Woolfolk Hoy & Burke Spero, 2005), prompted early career teachers to have a stronger desire than graduating teachers, to develop teaching skills (in planning, behaviour management, assessment) and in catering for diversity in their classrooms. This finding may also point to the need for pre-service educators to consider how to enhance the practical aspects of teaching in their courses, as suggested, for example, by Fantilli and McDougall (2009).

A second significant difference between cohorts occurred within the overarching category of career goals. While there were no significant differences between cohorts in the proportion of career goals nominated, the actual goals differed in two ways. Graduating teachers articulated significantly more goals related to employment conditions, specifically gaining employment,

whereas early career teachers focused more on gaining job security, for example in the form of permanency. As already indicated, these differences may reflect local employment conditions and opportunities and be in contrast to the intrinsic motivation typical of beginning teachers (Chong & Low, 2009; Sinclair, 2008).

A further finding from the study was that graduating teachers referred to avoidance goals significantly more often than the early career teacher cohort, but these goals did not necessarily sit within a single category. Although not a focus of the present study, this finding suggests that the relationship between approach and avoidance goals is complex, crossing multiple categories. A larger sample with specific questions about what teachers may want to avoid in their future teaching would be needed to explore this relationship more fully.

There are also some benefits in using a goal content approach to investigate teacher goals. As goals reflect the purposes of behaviour and influence thought processes, behaviour and emotions (Ford, 1992; Schutz, Crowder & White, 2001), investigating teacher goals from a content perspective provides a broad conceptualisation of goals, having the potential to reveal goals across many aspects of teachers' work. In this study, a goal content approach enabled investigation of a range of beginning teachers' professional goals which were related to the personal, situated and career aspects of teachers' work, taking into account multiple goals across multiple contexts. According to Day (Day & Gu, 2010; Day, et al., 2007) the personal, situated and professional aspects of teachers' lives are influenced by professional life phases and professional identities. These aspects interrelate to influence teacher wellbeing, commitment and resilience, which in turn impact a teacher's "capacity to give their best to the learning and growth of their pupils" (Day & Gu, 2010, p. 160). Conceiving of teachers' goals in this manner offers future opportunities for considering goals in relation to development of professional identity and across career phases, as well as considering goals that may have a positive relationship with teacher wellbeing, commitment and resilience. As

teacher resilience has recently become an important topic of interest (Beltman et al., 2011), especially in the light of teacher retention issues, this could be a useful way of moving the teacher motivation field forward.

Examining the content of goals may also help understand differences between teachers in different career phases. The cohort differences between graduating teachers and early career teachers in this study indicate that certain goals may be emphasised at particular career stages. Research examining teacher goals across career phases is scarce, yet based on this small sample, may be a worthy avenue for future research. As the participants in this study were at the early stage of their teaching career, it would be interesting to explore the goals of mid and late career teachers. Similarly, it would be interesting in future work to explore any trends in approach/avoid goal associations that emerged to a limited extent in this study.

Finally, from a methodological perspective, the study revealed goals for teaching that participants reported, rather than endorsed through responses to closed survey items. Open-ended questions have been used in other studies on teacher goals (e.g., Hagger & Malmberg, 2011; Lemos, 1996) to help elicit participants' spontaneous views. Using an open-ended question in this study enabled the qualitative data to reveal goals not previously identified in the literature, such as wellbeing goals and goals to develop a teacher identity. Limitations of this study should be acknowledged, such as data gathered from a single source with fairly limited space to write responses and participants not having the opportunity to check interpretation of the data. Even so, this methodology is useful in capturing key ideas from participants, and could be the basis for the future development of scales to measure teacher goals.

5. Conclusion

This empirical study contributes to the field of teacher motivation by identifying goals for teaching from a goal content perspective, and by structuring these into the *Beginning Teachers' Professional Goals Framework*. The overarching categories of personal, situated and career goals provide a way of conceptualising the specific goals that teachers in the very early stages of their profession express for their teaching. Goals that are highly endorsed by early career teachers could provide impetus for targeted professional development offered by employing bodies. Opportunities to identify and reflect on professional goals during pre-service courses may assist early career teachers to be better prepared for the realities of the profession. Understanding the possibility that professional goals may not be immediately attainable may enable teacher educators opportunities to examine and share strategies to build their students' capacity for professional resilience. Therefore, examining goals throughout teachers' professional career phases using a goal content approach offers a broader conceptualisation that provides further insights into teacher motivation.

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Table 1. Number of goals stated by Graduating (GT) and Early Career (ECT) teachers.

	Response 1	% of total respondents	Response 2	% of total respondents	Response 3	% of total respondents	total
GT	332	100	294	88.5	226	68	852
ECT	162	100	153	94.5	135	83.5	450
Total	494	100	447	90.5	362	73	1302

Table 2. Goals for teaching defined and illustrated

Goals for teaching	Definition	Examples	n (%)
Gain employment	Gain employment in general or in a particular region/ country/ sector/ school	<i>Obtain a full-time teaching position; To allow me to travel anywhere and find work; To work two years in a rural school; To work in different places and different cultures; To get a job at my chosen school in early childhood; To get a job within the Catholic Education sector; Obtain a job in a 'nice', local school.</i>	236 (14.5%)
Continue professional learning	To continue own learning and improvement, be a life long learner, engage in formal and informal professional learning including further tertiary study	<i>Continue professional learning and staying current; Continuous improvement in my teaching; Remain a researcher and continue on my learning journey; To keep learning and developing as a teacher; To start and finish my Masters in Education.</i>	194 (11.9%)
Develop teacher identity	To have positive perceptions of self as teacher and to be a particular kind of teacher – to be the best the best teacher possible, to be an effective/ successful/ approachable/ reflective teacher.	<i>Be the best teacher I can be; Become a successful competent teacher; Become an effective classroom teacher; To become an outstanding teacher; To be a proficient, successful teacher; To be approachable; To be an effective, inspiring and reflective educator.</i>	160 (9.8%)
Develop specific teaching skills and processes	To develop specific teaching skills in areas such as classroom management, communication, planning, assessment, technology, time management and organisation	<i>To learn more about technology; To develop my behaviour management skills; Streamline my planning process; Interesting lesson plans; Learn to become a better communicator; Develop effective time management strategies.</i>	145 (8.9%)

Experience positive (not negative) emotions	To experience positive emotions as a teacher – to feel happiness, satisfaction, enjoyment, success. To balance the work of teaching with other life pursuits including family, relationships and hobbies. To survive the year and avoid burnout, stress or negative emotions.	<i>Job satisfaction; To enjoy and be satisfied with my work; Achieving a balance between my work & family life; Looking forward to my job taking less time at night and on weekends; Enjoy being a teacher- I want to hold on to my love of teaching and excitement, I don't want to burn out or get stuck in a rut;</i>	139 (8.5%)
Help students and other teachers develop	To broadly wish to help students or colleagues develop, improve, be successful and reach their potential. To assist students developing skills they will use in the future.	<i>Positively contribute to the lives of my students - socially and academically; Provide pastoral, moral and ethical support to students; Support children gaining skills for life; To achieve the best educational outcomes for my students; to be able to mentor and develop more inexperienced teachers.</i>	115 (7.0%)
Develop a career path	To take on leadership roles in a school or in the profession, to achieve promotion	<i>Advance into leadership roles; Become a level two teacher and progress to a level three; Advance my career as a teacher; To become a Senior Teacher; To take up a leadership/support role once I am more experienced; To become a Principal</i>	96 (5.9%)
Facilitate effective learning experiences	To facilitate effective learning experiences/activities focusing on quality of lessons, programs and instruction, providing motivating, engaging, interesting, fun learning experiences.	<i>Create engaging and relevant learning experiences for my students; To create engaging and fun learning experiences; To provide authentic, meaningful and educational lessons; To provide innovative and interesting learning experiences for my students.</i>	90 (5.5%)
Be well regarded by	To be viewed by others as an excellent/effective/inspirational/successful teacher. To	<i>Become well respected by my student; Have the respect of my class and work colleagues; To be perceived as organised and competent by peers and students; To be</i>	69 (4.2%)

others	be a valued and respected staff member. To achieve professional recognition.	<i>recognised as a good teacher by my students and the school because I want to be a positive role model</i>	
Make a difference	To broadly make a difference in students' lives and/or to society in general	<i>To make a difference in students lives; To make a positive difference in the lives and learning of my students; Make a difference in education in remote communities; Work with under privileged children.</i>	66 (4.0%)
Earn an income	Financial security To earn money, to provide for family,	<i>To have a steady income; Secure financial independence for me and my family; To make a decent enough wage to buy a house.</i>	57 (3.5%)
Build relationships	To develop relationships with colleagues, students and parents	<i>To maintain relationships with co-workers; Network with other teachers in my field; Establish positive relationships with students' parents/ guardians; To establish solid relationships with students and colleagues; To build a relationship with my students.</i>	51 (3.1%)
Develop knowledge of content and curriculum	To develop knowledge of specific teaching content and curriculum	<i>To improve my knowledge of literacy and best practice in teaching; To enhance my knowledge of curriculum; Knowing the content; Become very familiar with the National curriculum; Improve literacy understanding.</i>	48 (2.9%)
Attain job security	Become employed under a permanent teaching contract	<i>Gain a permanent position; to have a permanent and secure job; Be secure in my position; Job security; To have a secure future.</i>	45 (2.8%)
Build positive learning	To create an effective learning environment attending more broadly to social and emotional aspects of the	<i>To create effective learning environment; To provide a safe and caring environment where children feel they can take risks; Provide a positive classroom environment</i>	42 (2.6%)

environments	classroom	<i>where mutual respect is valued.</i>	
Cater for diversity	To cater for the differing learning, emotional, social, cultural needs of individual students	<i>To cater for all diverse learning types and styles; Fair learning. I want to adapt my lessons to cater the students learning abilities; Differentiating work for students effectively; To assist students at educational risk to reach learning potential.</i>	38 (2.3%)
Build confidence	To increase confidence in teaching; to become more confident as a teacher.	<i>To be confident in my ability to teach; Become confident in my chosen career.</i>	21 (1.3%)
Belong to a community	To be part of the school and/or professional community and engage in community activities	<i>Feel part of the school community; Become involved in my school; To be involved in the school and community; Contribute to the wider school community; Engagement with the community of learners; To be Professional and part of a school team.</i>	21 (1.3%)

Table 3: Broad professional goals of beginning teachers

broad professional goal	# of references	% of references
Further learning	387	23.7%
Social relations	322	19.7%
Employment conditions	281	17.2%
Wellbeing	196	12.0%
Positive sense of self	181	11.1%
Pedagogy	170	10.4%
Career development	96	5.9%

Table 4: Comparison of goals for graduating (GT) and early career teacher (ECT) cohorts

	GT goals: % of references (n of references)	ECT goals: % of references (n of references)	Chi square	p- value
Personal goals	23.1 (n=249)	23.0 (n=128)	0.00	0.95
<i>Positive sense of self</i>	11.8 (n=127)	9.7 (n=54)	1.47	0.23
Build confidence	1.2 (n=13)	1.4 (n=8)	0.15	0.70
Develop teacher identity	10.6 (n=114)	8.3 (n=46)	2.04	0.15
<i>Wellbeing</i>	11.3 (n=122)	13.3 (n=74)	1.16	0.28
Experience positive (not negative) emotions	7.6 (n=82)	10.2 (n=57)	2.94	0.09
Earn an income	3.7 (n=40)	3.1 (n=17)	0.47	0.50
Situated goals	52.3 (n=563)	56.7 (n=316)	1.33	0.25
<i>Pedagogy</i>	9.9 (n=107)	11.3 (n=63)	0.66	0.42
Facilitate effective learning experiences	5.8 (n=62)	5.0 (n=28)	0.36	0.55
Build positive learning environments	2.5 (n=27)	2.7 (n=15)	0.05	0.83
Cater for diversity	1.7 (n=18)	3.6 (n=20)	5.80	0.02 *
<i>Further learning</i>	22.0 (n=237)	26.9 (n=150)	3.72	0.05 *
Continue professional learning	12.3 (n=132)	11.1 (n=62)	0.40	0.53
Develop knowledge of content and	2.7	3.4	0.64	0.42

curriculum	(n=29)	(n=19)		
Develop specific teaching skills and processes	7.1 (n=76)	12.4 (n=69)	11.72	0.00 **
<i>Social relations</i>	20.4 (n=219)	18.5 (n=103)	0.64	0.42
Build relationships	2.9 (n=31)	3.6 (n=20)	0.59	0.44
Belong to a community	1.2 (n=13)	1.4 (n=8)	0.15	0.70
Make a difference	4.6 (n=49)	3.1 (n=17)	2.05	0.15
Be well regarded by others	4.5 (n=48)	3.8 (n=21)	0.41	0.52
Help students and other teachers develop	7.2 (n=78)	6.6 (n=37)	0.19	0.66
Career goals	24.5 (n=264)	20.3 (n=113)	2.87	0.09
<i>Employment conditions</i>	19.3 (n=208)	13.1 (n=73)	8.26	0.00 **
Gain employment	17.4 (n=187)	8.8 (n=49)	18.70	0.00 **
Attain job security	2.0 (n=21)	4.3 (n=24)	7.40	0.01 *
<i>Career development</i>	5.2 (n=56)	7.2 (n=40)	2.44	0.12
Develop a career path	5.2 (n=56)	7.2 (n=40)	2.44	0.12
GT = Graduating Teachers; ECT = Early Career Teachers;		* p ≤ .05; ** p ≤ .001		

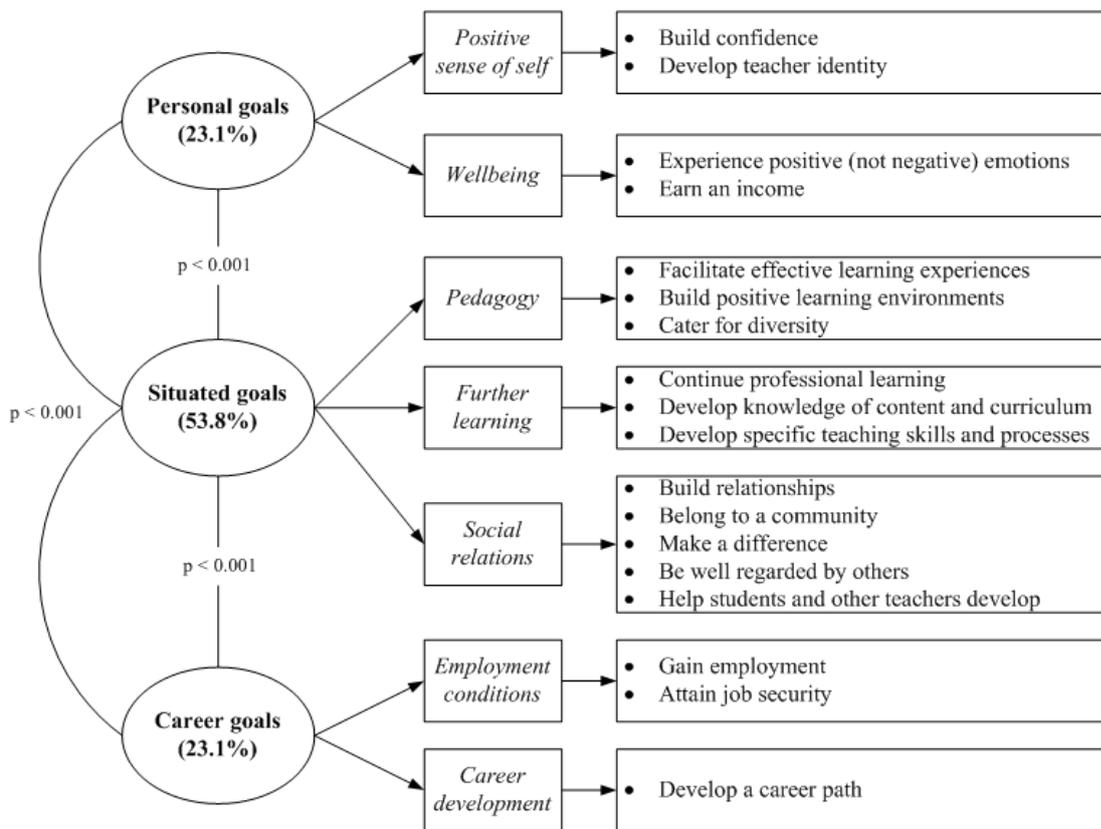


Figure 1. Beginning Teachers' Professional Goals