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Students' beliefs about teaching vocation in English language teaching

Creencias de los estudiantes sobre la vocación docente en la enseñanza del idioma inglés

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ABSTRACT

This study explored students' beliefs about teaching vocation in English Language Teaching (ELT) and examined how these beliefs relate to professional identity, teacher commitment and motivation toward learning English. A qualitative approach with a descriptive and exploratory design was employed. The study involved 55 students enrolled in the first and eighth semester of an English language teacher education program at a public university in Ecuador, including 29 first-semester and 26 eighth-semester students. Data were collected over eight weeks through weekly open-ended questionnaires administered via Google Forms. Each questionnaire contained nine questions focused on specific dimensions of teaching vocation, including professional identity, teacher commitment, motivation, and expectations about the teaching profession. The responses were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and differences between the two groups. The findings showed that first-semester students tended to associate

teaching vocation with personal interests, enjoyment of English, and an initial interest in teaching, while eighth semester students expressed a broader understanding related to social responsibilities, professional commitment, and teacher identity. Participants from both groups also perceived that teacher's commitment and interest in teaching could influence students' motivation, participation, and learning experiences. Regarding career choice, eighth-semester students demonstrated a more defined and realistic orientation toward teaching as a profession. Overall, the findings suggest that beliefs about teaching vocation become more differentiated throughout initial teacher training.

Keywords: teaching vocation, professional identity, teacher education, English language teaching, student beliefs

RESUMEN

Este estudio exploró las creencias de los estudiantes sobre la vocación docente en la enseñanza del inglés y examinó como estas creencias se relacionan con la identidad profesional, el compromiso docente y la motivación hacia el aprendizaje del inglés. Se empleó un enfoque cualitativo con un diseño descriptivo y exploratorio. Participaron 55 estudiantes de primer y octavo semestre de un programa de formación docente en inglés de una universidad pública de Ecuador, de los cuales 29 pertenecían a primer semestre y 26 a octavo semestre. La información se recopiló durante ocho semanas mediante cuestionarios abiertos semanales administrados a través de Google Forms. Cada cuestionario contenía nueve preguntas enfocadas en dimensiones específicas de la vocación, incluida la identidad profesional, el compromiso docente, la motivación y las expectativas sobre la profesión. Las respuestas se analizaron mediante análisis temático para identificar patrones recurrentes y diferencias entre ambos grupos. Los resultados mostraron que los estudiantes de primer tendieron a relacionar la vocación con intereses personales, el gusto por el inglés y un interés inicial por la enseñanza, mientras que los estudiantes de octavo expresaron una comprensión más amplia sobre relacionada con la responsabilidad social, el compromiso profesional y la identidad docente. Ambos grupos también percibieron que el compromiso e interés de los docentes pueden influir en la motivación, participación y experiencias de aprendizaje de los estudiantes. En cuanto a la elección profesional, los estudiantes de octavo semestre mostraron una orientación mas definida y realista hacia la docencia.

Palabras clave: vocación docente, identidad profesional, formación docente, enseñanza del inglés, creencias estudiantiles

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INTRODUCTION

English has become one of the most influential languages in education. This growth has led to a greater demand for teacher education programs worldwide. In countries where English is taught as a foreign language, preparing effective teachers goes beyond just improving language skills and teaching knowledge. It requires developing personal and professional qualities that impact teachers' commitment, motivation, and performance throughout their careers. One quality that has gained attention is teaching vocation. This concept affects how future educators view their responsibilities and how they contribute to students' learning and growth.

During their initial teacher education, students build beliefs about teaching through academic experiences, interactions with teacher educators, and involvement in educational settings. These beliefs shape their understanding of the teaching profession and help develop their professional identity. In English Language Teaching (ELT) programs, this process is especially crucial. Future teachers must blend subject knowledge with ethical commitment, reflective practice, and genuine interest in supporting student learning.

Teaching vocation is often seen as a sense of purpose, personal commitment, and motivation that drives individuals to dedicate themselves to teaching while aiding students' academic and personal growth. It goes beyond just deciding to become a teacher. It represents a lasting commitment to education and the responsibilities that come with it. Recent research shows that this sense of vocation enhances learning engagement, self-confidence, and positive views about teaching among pre-service teachers (Shang et al., 2022). Similarly, teachers who view their profession as a meaningful vocation tend to show higher commitment, better engagement, and greater resilience when facing educational challenges, which reduces the chances of professional burnout (Zhao et al., 2022). These findings underline the importance teaching vocation in shaping professional identity and long-term dedication to teaching.

Building on this idea, recent studies have highlighted how important teaching vocation is in teacher development. Badley and Hughes (2022) suggested that vocation gives teachers purpose, boosting their commitment and ability to meet the challenges of educational practice. Xing (2022) found that professional identity and commitment to vocation help teachers stay engaged and resilient. Perdomo-López et al. (2025) discovered that pre-service teachers view vocation as a key trait of effective teaching. In the realm of English language education, Mekheimer (2025) similarly noted that positive views about the purpose of teaching link with higher motivation and engagement in the learning process. Together, these studies show that teaching vocation is vital for preparing commitment, reflective, and resilient English language teachers.

While existing research has looked at teaching vocation, professional identity, and motivation from various angles, there has been limited focus on students' beliefs about teaching

vocation during their initial teacher education. Few studies have explored how these beliefs change from the start to the finish of teacher preparation and how they shape students' views on professional identity, teacher commitment, and motivation to learn English. This gap points to the need for further research into students' perspectives within English language teacher education programs.

Examining these beliefs is important. Students' views on teaching vocation can influence their understanding of the teaching profession, their future career goals, commitment to teaching, and motivation to learn English. Additionally, recognizing these beliefs can provide useful insights for teacher education programs looking to strengthen professional identity and create educational experiences that encourage reflective, committed, and motivated future teachers. In Ecuador, where improving the quality of English language education is a significant challenge, it is vital to understand students' beliefs about teaching vocation, preparation, and educational practice.

In light of this context, this study aimed to explore students' beliefs about teaching vocation in English Language Teaching. It also aimed to examine how these beliefs connect with their views on professional identity, teacher commitment, and motivation to learn English. This study treated students' beliefs about teaching vocation as a central focus and looked at its relationship with professional identity, teacher commitment, and motivation throughout the teacher education process. To achieve these goals, the research took a qualitative approach with a descriptive and exploratory design, involving first- and last- semester students in an English language education program at a public university in Ecuador.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The present study adopted a qualitative approach with a descriptive and exploratory design to examine students' beliefs about the teaching vocation in English Language Teaching (ELT). This methodological approach was considered appropriate because it allowed participants to express their perceptions, experiences, and personal reflections in their own words. This facilitated an in-depth understanding of how beliefs about teaching vocation are formed and change throughout initial teacher education. The descriptive component made it possible to identify and interpret these beliefs. At the same time, the exploratory nature of the study provided an opportunity to investigate a topic that has received limited attention in English teacher education within the Ecuadorian context.

The research was conducted in the Pedagogy of National and Foreign Languages program at a public university in Ecuador. This teacher education program prepares future English teachers through courses focused on language proficiency, linguistics, pedagogy, curriculum design, educational psychology, learning assessment, and supervised pre-professional teaching practices. This study focused on comparing students who were at the beginning and at the end of their

university education. The objective was to explore possible differences in their beliefs about the teaching vocation and its relationship with professional identity, teaching commitment, and motivation to learn English.

The population consisted of 55 students enrolled in the first and final semesters of the program during the academic period in which the research was conducted. The sample included 29 first-semester students and 26 final-semester students. Participants were selected through purposive non-probability sampling, as they represented the two stages of teacher education considered relevant to achieving the objectives of the study. Participation was voluntary and depended on students' attendance at the sessions scheduled for data collection.

The information was collected through a series of open-ended questionnaires, which the researcher designed and administered through Google Forms over eight weeks. Instead of using a single questionnaire, a different form was created each week to explore specific aspects of beliefs about the teaching vocation. Each questionnaire consisted of nine open-ended questions, designed to encourage reflective and descriptive responses about different aspects of the phenomenon under study. The questions addressed topics such as the understanding of the teaching vocation, perceptions of professional commitment, experiences with teachers who demonstrated or did not demonstrate vocation, the relationship between vocation and motivation, the construction of professional identity, and expectations regarding the teaching profession. In some weeks, the questions focused on a specific topic, such as professional identity, inviting participants to reflect on how they saw themselves as future teachers, the challenges or fears they anticipated, and the reasons behind their responses. This progressive data collection strategy made it possible to obtain increasingly rich and detailed qualitative information throughout the research process.

To ensure that all participants fully understood the questions and could express their ideas comfortably, two versions of the questionnaires were created according to the students' level of English proficiency. For first-semester students, each question was presented in both Spanish and English, as they were still developing their linguistic competence and felt more confident expressing complex ideas in their native language. In contrast, the questionnaires for final-semester students were written entirely in English because they had already reached the level of language proficiency expected by the academic program. This approach sought to facilitate comprehension without compromising the coherence of the research objectives.

The researcher designed the weekly questionnaires based on the general objectives and the specific objectives of the study. Before beginning data collection, the research advisor reviewed all the instruments to verify the clarity, coherence, and relevance of the questions in relation to the proposed objectives. Following this review, the questionnaires were considered appropriate for administration.

Data collection was carried out over eight consecutive weeks. During the first week, participants received detailed information about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation, and the confidentiality of the information to be collected. Students who decided to participate completed informed consent through Google Forms before responding to the research instruments. In the following weeks, two weekly visits were made to the first-and final-semester classes to administer the corresponding questionnaires. This planning allowed students who had been absent from a previous session to participate in the following one. At the end of each week, the responses were organized and reviewed before administering the next questionnaire. This procedure allowed the researcher to gradually become familiar with the emerging information and maintain consistency between data collection and the objectives of the study.

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns and common themes in the participants responses. Initially, the responses from each weekly questionnaire were read repeatedly to ensure adequate familiarity with the information. Subsequently, relevant ideas and recurring patterns were identified, with similar responses grouped into broader thematic categories based on their meaning and their relationship to the research objectives. Special attention was paid to comparing first-semester and final-semester students to identify similarities and differences in their beliefs regarding the teaching vocation, professional identity, teaching commitment, and motivation for learning English. The themes identified during the analysis process formed the basis for interpreting the participants' perceptions and discussing the results in light of previous research.

Ethical research principals were upheld throughout the entire research process. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all students provided informed consent before joining the study. Furthermore, they were informed that the information provided would be used exclusively for academic purposes, with the confidentiality of their personal data guaranteed at all times. Responses were analyzed anonymously, and results were presented in an aggregated format, avoiding any information that could identify the participants

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students' perceptions of teaching vocation across the semester

The results revealed clear differences between first-semester and final-semester students regarding their understanding of the teaching vocation. While students at the beginning of their university studies tended to link the vocation to personal interest such as fondness for the English language or an enjoyment of teaching, final semester students demonstrated a broader, more professional understanding of the concept. Among this latter group, responses associating the vocation with social responsibility, commitment to students, and the recognition of teaching as a profession requiring preparation, dedication, and continuous.

Figure 1

Students Perceptions of Teaching Vocation Across Semester (%)

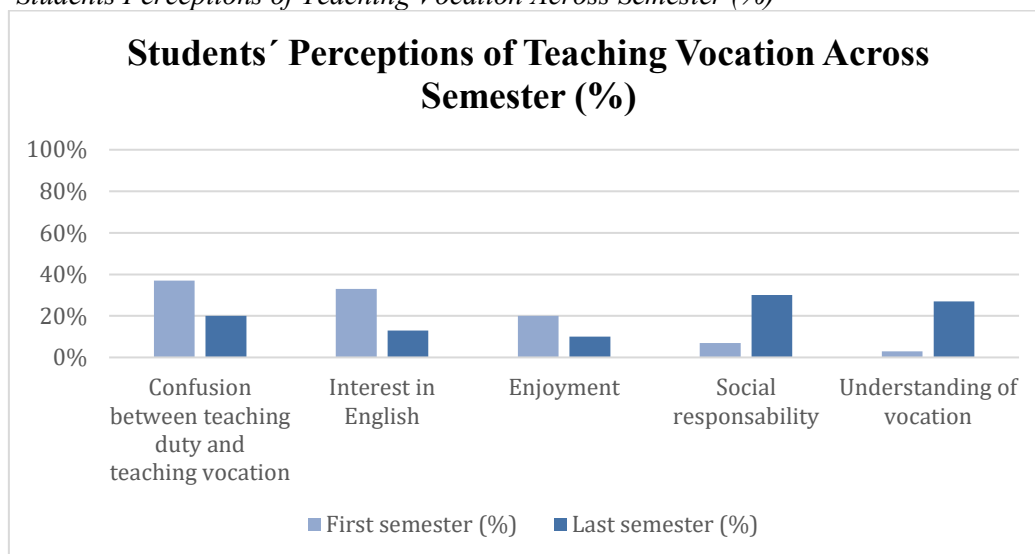


Figure 1 illustrates this progressive shift in the participants beliefs. In the first semester, responses reflecting an initial understanding of the teaching vocation predominated, characterized primarily by an interest in learning English and an enjoyment of teaching. Furthermore, several students expressed confusion between a teacher's professional duty and the concept of vocation, suggesting that, at the start of the program, the two terms were not yet clearly distinguished. In the contrast, final-semester students placed greater emphasis on dimensions related to social responsibility and a deeper understanding of the teaching vocation, indicating an evolution in how they interpreted professional practice.

These findings suggest that beliefs regarding the teaching vocation do not remain static during initial teacher training; rather, they gradually evolve as students engage in pedagogical coursework, pre-professional practicums, and experiences involving reflection on teaching. Rather than viewing the vocation as an innate attribute or one linked solely to a love of teaching, prospective teachers begin to recognize it as an ethical and professional commitment that entails responsibility for students learning and holistic development.

This evolution aligns with findings by Shang et al. (2022), who observed that a strong teaching vocation fosters professional commitment and enhances the engagement of prospective teachers in their training process. Similarly, Badley and Hughes (2022) argue that a vocation provides a sense of purpose that guides professional decisions and helps teachers navigate the demands of educational practice. These studies support the view that a vocation is an aspect that develops and strengthens during teacher training, rather than a characteristic that is fully defined prior to university entry.

The results are also consistent with research on teacher professional identity, which posits that the beliefs of prospective teachers evolve through the interplay of personal experiences, academic training, and educational contexts. Reviews by Rushton (2023) and by Pérez Gracia,

Serrano Rodríguez, and Pontes Pedrajas (2022) highlight that professional identity is a dynamic process constructed gradually, and that experiences during initial training shape how students understand their future role as teachers.

In the field of teaching English as a foreign language, recent studies show that professional identity and attitudes toward teaching improve when students reflect on their beliefs, compare them with real-world experiences, and understand the demands of the educational setting. A systematic review of English teachers reveals that professional identity develops through ongoing negotiation between personal beliefs, training experiences, and institutional expectations. This explains why students approaching graduation often have more complex and mature views of the teaching profession.

In this study, this evolution is particularly important because it shows that initial teacher training not only helps build linguistic and teaching knowledge but also changes students' beliefs about the teaching profession. This shift from focusing mainly on personal interest to emphasizing responsibility, commitment, and educational service is a key finding for English teacher training programs in Ecuador. These results point to the importance of providing systematic reflection opportunities on teaching and professional identity from the earliest semesters. This aims to encourage a deeper understanding of the profession's social and educational significance.

Development of Professional Identity

The results in Figure 2 show how first-and final-semester students view their professional identity as future English teachers. First-semester students often express more vocational uncertainty and see teaching as a possible career. In contrast, final semester-students typically have a clearer teacher identity, a stronger sense of ethical commitment, and a better understanding of the need for ongoing learning. Overall, these results indicate that as students progress through their teacher education, their view of the teaching role becomes more defined.

Figure 2
Professional Identity Development

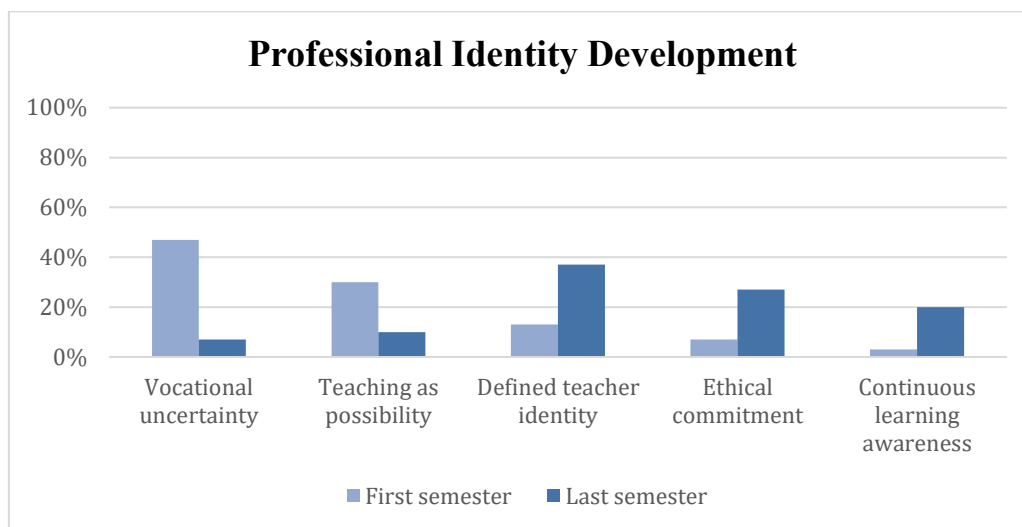


Figure 2 shows that vocational uncertainty is much more common among first-semester students than among final-semester students. The category “teaching as possibility” also appears more often in the initial group. These answers reflect an exploratory stage where some students are still figuring out how they see themselves as future teachers. This aligns with the responses from open-ended questions about professional identity, where participants discussed how they envision themselves as future teachers and their main concerns about becoming teachers.

In contrast, the category “defined teacher identity” is more common among final-semester students. Their responses indicate a clearer connection to the teaching profession and a broader understanding of its responsibilities. This difference is significant because it shows that professional identity goes beyond just wanting to teach, it also involves a concrete understanding of what it means to be a teacher.

This finding supports Izadinia’s perspectives (2013), which suggests that the professional identity of future teachers develops gradually through their learning experiences, reflection, and interactions with various educational settings. From this viewpoint, identity is not fully formed when students begin their education program. Instead, it is shaped as they interpret their experiences and rethink their ideas about the profession. This explanation is relevant to the results, as first-semester students exhibited higher levels of uncertainty, while final-semester students showed a more defined sense of themselves as future teachers.

Beauchamp and Thomas (2009) maintain that teacher identity is a complex and dynamic process which is shaped by one’s personal beliefs, reflective thinking, experiences, and the social interactions that occurs as a part of professional training. Viewing it in this way, the changes seen among the two groups may be seen belonging to the process by which students start to figure out who they are and who they would like to become in the teaching profession. This interpretation

is also in line with the general approach of the study, namely that training experiences help to alter the way students conceive of their vocation and their future in their profession.

The findings are also connected with those of Pérez Gracia et al. (2022), who looked into the way in which the professional identity of prospective English as a foreign language teachers is constructed. Their study points out that aspects concerning students' motivation, classroom management, and their relationships with students are important elements of professional identity. Similarly, the students in the present study also demonstrated an understanding that extends beyond a simple personal interest in English and is directed towards the responsibility entailed in teaching. Hence, the difference between the two groups appears to stem not only from a greater interest in becoming teachers but also from a more comprehensive grasp of the characteristics and responsibilities connected with this profession.

A further result relates to ethical commitment, as this is something that is mentioned more often by students in their final semester. It is possible to note that the development of professional identity is also connected with the way students perceive their responsibility towards learners. In the responses examined, the more advanced students stressed the importance of supporting students' learning and upholding professional responsibility, whereas the initial group did not highlight these ideas to the same extent. This difference indicates that, during their training, teaching starts to be seen not just as a professional activity but also as a responsibility towards those who take part in the educational process. The original draft also points out this change by stating that the final-semester students saw themselves more clearly as future educators and stressed the need for continuous learning without abandoning their ethical commitment to students.

In this regard, Rushton et al. (2023) see teacher identity as a dynamic process which evolves in light of personal, professional, and contextual experiences. This review of the literature that they have carried out enables one to regard the formation of identity as comprising the process of becoming a teacher, whereby individual experiences and the various training contexts can affect the way in which prospective teachers see themselves as professionals. It is from this point of view that one can account for the fact that final-semester students have a more clear-cut teacher identity than those who are at the start of their training.

The aspect known as "continuous learning awareness" also contributes a significant factor when trying to understand this distinction; it is found in considerably smaller amounts among students in their first semester whereas it becomes more prominent among those in their final semester. This finding shows that the more advanced students appear to be more aware that teacher education does not cease when the degree has been completed; on the other hand, they start to see continuous learning as an ongoing element of the profession. This way of thinking is an important part of professional identity since it means that teachers come to realise they have to keep developing their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

This result is linked to the study by Yuan and Lee (2014), in which the authors examined how the beliefs of prospective English teachers change during their teaching practicum. They found that the training they received could cause prospective teachers to review, confirm, or alter their beliefs regarding teaching. Even though the current study is not solely concerned with teaching practice, this viewpoint helps to examine how the experiences gained during training can contribute to a change in the way students perceive their professional future. In the case under consideration, the students in the final semester clearly demonstrate a more developed understanding of the responsibilities and demands connected with the profession.

Choi and Park (2022) also discovered that the practical training that prospective English teachers undergo can have an effect on their professional identity and motivation. This point of view is applicable when considering their higher level of professional identification seen among students in their final semester, since progressing through a teacher education programme brings about greater contact with pedagogical knowledge and teaching-related experiences. Such experiences offer the opportunity to compare one's original expectations with the real demands of the profession.

As a general rule, Figure 2 illustrates a change from a state of greater uncertainty to a more definite professional identity. In their first year, students are at an exploratory stage where teaching might be seen as a possibility and where there is still doubt about their future careers. By contrast, the students in their final year show a clearer commitment to teaching, along with a greater sense of ethical responsibility and an awareness of the need to keep on learning. This trend is in line with the viewpoint set out in the draft that professional training can help bring about a change in the way teaching is understood, moving from initial personal motivations to a more professional and social understanding of teaching.

However, these results should not be seen as proof that university education alone leads to the development of professional identity. Students come into the program with their own experiences, expectations, beliefs, and motivation that can also shape their development. Therefore, the results highlight differences between students at various training stages, but they do not show a direct cause-and-effect relationship. This distinction is especially important given the qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory nature of the study.

The comparison between the two training stages also connects with the results from Figure 1. It shows that first-semester students tended to connect vocation mostly to their interest in English or enjoyment of teaching. In contrast, final-semester students displayed an understanding that leaned more toward professional responsibility and social contribution. Figure 2 adds to this finding by illustrating that this shift in how students view vocation relates to their self-perception as future teachers.

Thus, the results suggest a close link between vocation and professional identity in the teacher education process. Vocation does not just serve as an initial motivation for choosing a

career; it can take on a more professional meaning as students encounter academic and educational experiences. Among the participants in this study, the shift from a personal view of vocation to one based on responsibility, commitment and continuous learning coincided with a clearer professional identity.

This aspect represents a key contribution of the study. While earlier research has looked at the professional identity of future teachers, these results allow us to see how beliefs about teaching vocation and the development of professional identity seem to connect among students in an English teacher education program in Ecuador. The findings not only show differences between first- and final semester students but also shed light on how various dimensions of vocation such as commitment, responsibility, and the perception of teaching's purpose can shape the way students form their professional identity.

From a practical standpoint, these results suggest that English teacher education programs could purposely include opportunities for reflection on professional identity and vocation at different stages of the degree program. Activities such as discussing educational experiences, analyzing teacher models, and reflecting on professional responsibilities and expectations about the teaching profession could help students link their initial motivations to the professional and social aspects of teaching.

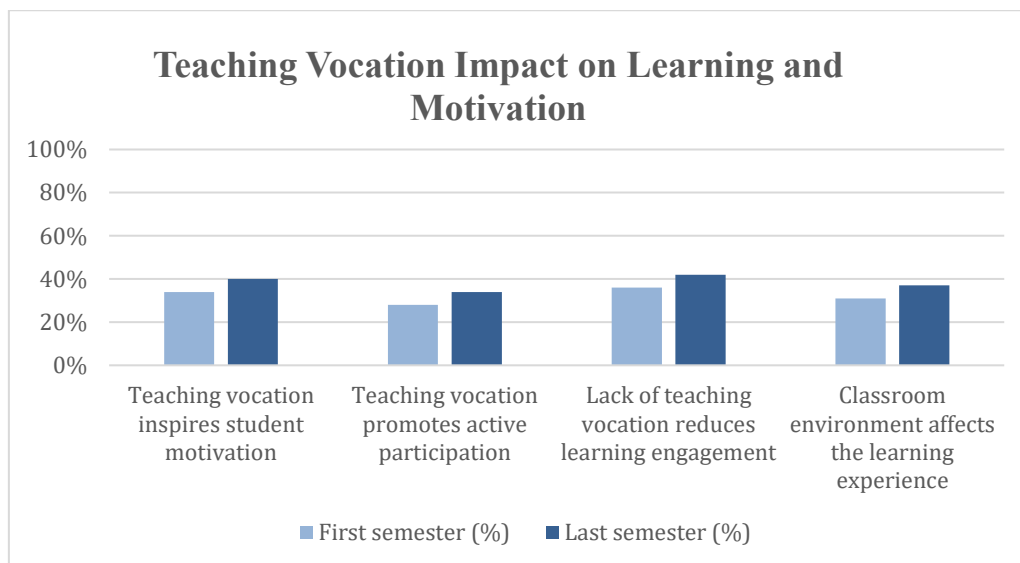
As a result, the main takeaway from this figure is that building professional identity seems to involve a gradual change in how students understand teaching vocation. First-semester students have a more exploratory view, while final-semester students express a clearer professional identity and greater awareness of ethical commitment and continuous learning. This finding highlights the importance of examining vocation and professional identity together in initial English teacher education, especially in areas where research on students' views of these processes is still limited.

Teaching Vocation Impact on Learning and Motivation

The results in Figure 3 show that both first-semester and final-semester students recognized a relationship between teaching vocation and the English learning experience. At both points in their training, participants noted that teachers who demonstrate commitment and genuine interest in teaching can boost students' motivation and participation. Although this perception was somewhat more common among final-semester students, the difference between the two groups was not significant. This suggests that such awareness is already present in the early stages of teacher education.

Figure 3

Teaching Vocation Impact on Learning and Motivation



As Figure 3 indicates, the categories “teaching vocation inspires student motivation” and “teaching vocation promotes active participation” were identified by students in both semesters. These findings imply that participants do not see teaching vocation solely as a personal trait of the teacher; they also view it as something reflected in teachers’ teaching methods and interactions with students. In the analyzed responses teachers’ commitment and interest were linked to a greater willingness among students to participate and learn during English classes.

This perception aligns with the research by Frenzel et al. (2019), who studied teacher enthusiasm. They found that signals related to teachers’ motivation can impact students’ motivation and learning experiences. In relation to the current study, this previous research helps explain how students recognize vocation through specific teacher behaviors, such as enthusiasm, interest, and a desire to engage in the educational process.

A similar trend appears in the category lack of teaching vocation reduces learning engagement. Participants associated a lack of interest or commitment from teachers with lower participation, reduced motivation, and less positive learning experiences. This finding is significant as it shows that students recognize both the positive effects of dedicated teaching and the negative consequences of a lack of commitment.

This interpretation relates to (Keller et al. (2018), who investigated various forms of teacher enthusiasm and their impact on students’ emotions. Their results indicated that the combination of teachers’ actual enthusiasm and how they display it during teaching is linked to more positive emotional experiences among students. While the current study did not directly measure teacher enthusiasm or students’ emotions, this evidence helps clarify why participants connected teachers’ interest and commitment to a better learning experience.

The category “classroom environment affects the learning experience” supports this interpretation further. Participants acknowledge that teachers’ attitudes can shape the classroom environment and, in turn, influence how students experience learning. In this context, the learning environment appears in the responses as linked to teacher-student interaction and the opportunities students have to engage during English classes.

Additionally, a recent systematic review by (Asadpour et al. (2025) identified several teacher-related factors influencing students’ academic motivation, including teacher support, relationships with students, teaching practices, and students views on teachers’ characteristics. The authors analyzed 38 peer-reviewed studies involving over 54,000 students. This previous research is relevant to the current findings, as the participants also connected teachers’ traits and attitudes with their motivation and learning experiences.

Overall, the findings suggest that students see teaching vocation as a quality expressed through observable behaviors in the classroom. To the participants, a teacher with vocation is not just someone interested in teaching but someone whose commitment is evident in how they run their classes, interact with students; and encourage participation. This way, vocation takes on a practical role that connects teachers’ personal qualities with students learning experiences.

An important point is that both semesters shared this perception. Unlike Figure 2, which showed clearer differences in the development of professional identity, the responses in Figure 3 demonstrate a relatively similar pattern between the two groups. This indicates that the view of teachers influencing students’ motivation and participation does not necessarily rely on the stage of teacher education participants are in. This understanding may stem from their experiences as English learners and the different teachers they have had throughout their educational journeys.

This finding also connects to Figure 1, where students from both groups recognized various aspects of teaching vocation, though they interpreted it differently. First-semester students were more likely to associate vocation with personal traits, such as interest in English and enjoyment of teaching, while final-semester students focused more on responsibility and professional commitment. Figure 3 adds to this finding by showing that, despite differences in how vocation is understood, both groups acknowledge that the way teachers perform their role can influence students’ learning experiences.

The findings from this figure provide useful insights into the social aspect of teaching vocation. Vocation is not just an internal motivation for teachers; it is also something students can notice. They connect it to their own motivation, participation, and classroom experiences.

However, due to the study’s qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory nature, these findings reflect participants views rather than proof of a direct link between teaching vocation and academic performance or motivation. Students believe that such an influence exists, but the research design does not allow us determine how much students’ motivation changes because of

teachers' vocation. Recognizing this difference helps keep our understanding aligned with the study's approach.

From a practical standpoint, the findings suggest that teacher education programs should not only focus on building language and teaching skills but also on how future teachers express commitment, enthusiasm, and a desire to support their students. Offering chances to reflect on teaching experiences, classroom interactions, and ways to encourage participation could aid future teachers in understanding how their attitudes and practices might lead to better learning experiences.

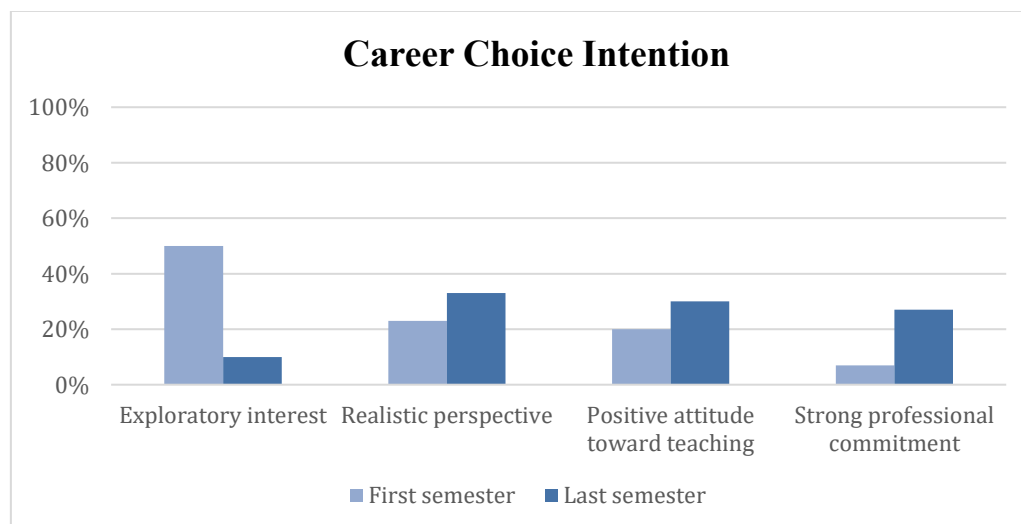
In short, Figure 3 shows that students view teaching vocation as connected to motivation, participation, and the learning environment. This perception exists among both students starting their training and those nearing the end. The key takeaway is that it highlights how vocation becomes noticeable in educational interactions; students see it not just in teachers' thoughts or feelings about their work, but also in how they teach and engage with students.

Career Choice Intention

The results in Figure 4 show how first-semester and final semester students view teaching English as a potential career. First-semester students tend to have exploratory interests, while final-semester students show a realistic view, a positive attitude toward teaching, and a stronger commitment to the profession. This change suggests that students get a clearer understanding of the teaching profession as they move through their training.

Figure 4

Career Choice Intention



The prevalence of exploratory interest in the first semester may relate to the early stage where the choice of teaching is still connected to personal interests and future hopes. In contrast, final-semester students have a more concrete view of the profession, along with a positive attitude and a clearer professional commitment. This trend matches the study's qualitative findings. Advanced students show a stronger connection to the responsibility that come with teaching.

In this context, Torres-Hernández and Lozano-Suárez, (2026) found that a teaching vocation relates to beliefs in self-efficacy and professional skills. They highlight that such a vocation can drive professional growth and help meet the challenges of teaching. This view suggests that a more defined career choice relies not only on an interest in teaching but also on how future teachers see their abilities and responsibilities.

Similarly, Rahaman (2025) argues that students' identities and the futures they envision can affect their commitment to learning English. The study shows that how students imagine their identities and their roles in their educational settings influences their involvement in the learning process. Thus, the desire to become a teacher may also link to how students picture themselves in the profession.

Overall, Figure 4 suggests that the decision to teach develops gradually, moving from initial interest to a clearer professional focus. However, due to the qualitative and exploratory nature of the study, these differences should be seen as the participants' views and intentions, rather than proof that university training directly shapes their career choices.

This result adds to previous figures by showing that perceptions of vocation and professional identity also affect the students' future careers. While first-semester students mostly express a sense of exploration, those in their final-semester display greater clarity about teaching as a profession and the responsibilities it involves.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study show that students beliefs about the teaching vocation vary based on their training stage. First-semester students primarily associated teaching with personal interests, such as a love for English, enjoyment of teaching, and a wish to help others. In contrast, eighth semester students had a broader understanding related to social responsibilities, professional commitment, and the demands that come with teaching.

Additionally, the findings highlight differences in how participants shape their professional identity. First-semester students showed more uncertainty and saw teaching as just a possible career. Eighth-semester students had a clearer teaching identity, along with a stronger awareness of ethical commitment and the need for ongoing learning. These results suggest that experiences during initial teacher training can help future teachers gain a clearer understanding of their professional role.

Both groups noted that the way teachers do their job can impact students' motivation, participation, and overall learning experience. Participants linked teacher commitment and interest to better learning environment. In contrast, a perceived lack of vocation was associated with lower participation and engagement in English classes. However, these findings reflect participants views and do not prove a direct link between a teachers sense of vocation and students' academic motivation.

Finally, regarding career choice, first-semester students mainly showed an exploratory interest in teaching, while eighth-semester students had a more realistic outlook, a positive attitude toward teaching, and a clearer professional commitment. Overall, these findings suggest that a calling to teach becomes more meaningful during initial teacher training, shaped by the combination of students' academic and professional experiences. However, due to the study's qualitative, descriptive, and exploratory nature, these differences should not be seen as a proof that university training directly influences the development of a teaching vocation or the choice to become a teacher.

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