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“TEACHING IS ASTONISHINGLY FULFILLING” A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON JOB SATISFACTION IN BIREUEN REGENCY, ACEH

Abstract

This qualitative study focused on understanding job satisfaction from three teachers in Bireuen Regency, Aceh. Data collected through interviews were analysed using a framework of four categories: their beliefs on their ways of teaching, teachers' reasons to take teaching carrier, things they criticize and things that make them happy in teaching, and whether they find teaching is fulfilling. The interview result showed that the three teachers love of their job. The teacher believes in, not only teaching the content knowledge but also “akhlak” and personality as a focus of their teaching. The three teachers interviewed perceived that their intentions to choose teaching carrier are not sincere, since they did not plan to be teacher or because teaching is their ambition, but the salary factor and economical factor may influence their decision, but the interview result indicated that once the teachers face their students, they are doing their best to teach them and at the same time to shape their personality. The teachers realized that there are things need to be fixed in their teaching and have definitely things they love in teaching. In term of job satisfaction, the three teachers are satisfied with their job. Mrs. R stated “teaching is astonishingly fulfilling”, while the other two teachers expressed their satisfaction in similar manner.

Keywords: Teaching, Job Satisfaction

INTRODUCTION

Teacher job satisfaction is an important factor that can influence the quality of education and teachers' performance. As the spearhead of education, the role of teachers is very crucial in creating a conducive learning environment and encouraging student achievement. Therefore, teacher job satisfaction is an element that cannot be ignored by schools and the government.

Teacher job satisfaction is influenced by various interrelated factors, both internal and external. Apart from that, other factors that play a role in teacher job satisfaction are teacher's beliefs on their profession, teachers' reasons to take teaching carrier, things they criticize in their teaching and things that make them happy in teaching, and whether they find teaching is fulfilling.

Job satisfaction can be influenced by teacher's beliefs on their profession. Teacher beliefs on their profession may encompass teachers feeling and opinion about the profession. Teachers may refer to these feeling as “love, pride or joy (Tracy & Robins, 2007; Jackson, 2012). Others beliefs are teachers' opinion about their way of teaching; what constitutes an effective teaching, and how they conduct their classes and their shared view toward the subject they teach; stressing on its value and importance in their community (Richard & Lockhart, 1996)

The reasons teachers choose a teaching career can also influence their level of job satisfaction. Teachers motive or reason in choosing teaching carrier influence how hard they are going to work, their willingness to improve their teaching, the extra time they will spent outside their teaching time, and the degree of satisfaction they experience with their career choice (Watt, et al., 2014)

Things teachers criticize in their teaching and things that make them happy in teaching are another thing that influences job satisfaction. Realizing that there are thing to criticize in their teaching is an initial step to fix it. Teachers willingness to improve teaching in a formal professional development and in a less formal professional development program has two kinds of benefits, namely benefits on the development of teacher abilities and benefits on the level of teacher job satisfaction (OECD, 2013).

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‘Things that make them happy in teaching’ is said to have relationship with self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Having one aspect you like in your job is greatly influenced by teachers' sense of efficacy or the feeling that they are successful in their work. Self-efficacy and work motivation influence job satisfaction. The higher the level of self-efficacy owned by an employee, the higher the level of job satisfaction. On the other hand, if an employee has a low level of self-efficacy, then an employee's job satisfaction will also decrease (Putri & Wibawa, 2016).

Upon realizing how important it is for teacher to feel satisfied at their job and what are the things that influence job satisfaction, this research is aimed to explore teachers' beliefs on their job satisfaction to the profession. The research used interview technique. Several questions are posed in order to do so. The focuses of the interview are: their beliefs on their profession, teachers' reasons to take teaching carrier, things they criticize in their teaching and things that make them happy in teaching, and whether they find teaching is fulfilling. It is hoped that the importance of understanding the factors that influence teacher job satisfaction can provide insight for policy makers in creating policies and programs that can improve teacher welfare and performance, as well as overall improve the quality of education in Indonesia.

METHOD

The method of this research is qualitative. The instrument used in this study was semi structured interview guide, in order to gather in-depth information about teachers' perception on job satisfaction. The questions asked were five open-ended questions with various answers. Research was conducted in Bireuen regency. The interviews were conducted in different places at the teachers' free time. There were three participants involved in this research. The focuses of the research are: teachers' reasons to take teaching carrier, their perception on their ways of teaching, things they criticize in their teaching and things that make them happy in teaching, and whether they find teaching is fulfilling.

The Respondent of this research are three teachers. The first teacher is Mrs. R who taught mathematics at Elementary school. She is 61 years old and she retired on August, 2023. The interview was conducted on 14th Mei, 2024. The second teacher is Mr. B who teaches English at Junior High School. He is 52 years old. The interview conducted on 28th Mei, 2024. The third teacher is Mrs. A who teaches the first grade at another elementary school. She is 32 years old. The interview was conducted on 3rd June 2024.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

1. Finding

a. Teachers' Beliefs on teaching profession

When being asked about her beliefs about teaching profession Mrs. R stated:

“Being a teacher is not as easy as it looked. Teaching math is never easy. Math is a subject that students fear the most. So I have to find the best way to make students understand. But what more difficult is to shape their behavior or ‘Akhlak, in defining behavior, teaching most of the time is about math but always about akhlak. Teaching is transforming, I may teach math so that my students can used math in the future, but the most important thing is to teach them how to behave. If I did my best, and succeeded in teaching, I think my job is very useful and I’m doing something for this job.”

The same question were asked to Mr. B about his beliefs on teaching profession, and he said:

“Indonesia is a very rich country, but poor in human resources. I believe that by being a teacher I can change this condition. I want to build a better community, and I will do so by teaching. I want to open my students' mind so in the future they will be teachers; doctors, lawyers, and so on. Then they will be able to help the society around them. I love my job because I love to communicate with people. This job provides me with opportunity to relate with students, their parents and community.

For Mrs. A,

“I believe that my job is very important, because I teach first grade at elementary school where students are very young and still depend on teachers very much. I believe that my

job is protecting my students' way of thinking and their way to value themselves. Even my job oftentimes tiringz but it also very enjoyable”

b. Teachers' Reasons to Take Teaching Carrier

The first teacher, Mrs. R was asked about her reason to choose teaching carrier, and her answer was:

“I choose teaching in the first place because I need to get a job and earn money on my own as fast as I could to help her poor family. So, soon after I graduated from junior high school, I enter PGA (school that prepared students to be teachers who teaches religion). When normally people would choose high school then university but high school and university would take longer than PGA.”

The second teacher, Mr. B was asked the same question, and his answer was:

“I chose to be a teacher because it is the opportunity available at the time. Not because I have a sincere intention. After I graduated from high school I had two options. First to continue to the university and took Syariah as my major because I took syariah as my major in high school. The second choice is the two year program provided in Syiah Kuala University by the government to train high school graduates to be teachers because at the time teachers were very few. My first choice would cost me much money, while the second choice was free because the program was supported by the government. Then I chose the second choice because it was cheaper.”

The third teacher, Mrs. A's reason of choosing teaching carrier was:

“I was graduated from administration supervision program that supposed to allow me work as an administrator in educational board. But I cannot work there because I bear diploma Dua (D2) and there was a change in regulation which stated only graduates who bear Diploma Tiga (D3) can work as an education administrator. After six years I was granted with 'akta mengajar/teaching certificate' by the government so it was possible for me to teach elementary school.”

c. Things Teachers Criticize in Their Teaching and Things That Make Them Happy In Teaching.

When discussing about things to criticize in her teaching, Mrs. R said:

“Government suggest that teacher teach using LCD, computers, and another technology. My weakness is I'm not able to operate computer. I do not know how to teach math using those stuffs because I'm accustomed to teach using merely chalk and blackboard. It is depressing sometimes when my students ask me why they don't use LCD like another class. Even if I manage to use a computer, I usually get some help from younger teacher.”

About things that make her happy in teaching, Mrs. R said:

“I love my students very much. I believe that the children also love me back even they afraid of me; sometimes a noisy class would turn quiet when I arrive. I love spending time with them and sometimes I do not realize that my teaching time is over. This love also gives me motivation to fix my way of teaching. I learn how to use a computer; even when I may easily forget and need help from other teacher. But because I want to give my students the best, I keep learning.”

Mr. B criticizes his initial intention to teach because of the salary, he said:

“Back then the salary was very little, it hardly enough to fulfill the life needs. Then I met my students and started to teach and realized that I love teaching. Seminar and teachers meeting I followed also helping me changing the way I view my job and realized how noble it is to work as teachers.

Things that makes him happy to be a teacher is he believed that he has his share in building the future.

“These students are future, teachers, doctors and policeman, knowing that I have something to do with that makes me happy”

Things Mrs. A criticizes her reluctance to teach first grader,

“At first I was reluctant to teach first grade, because people said that first grader are hard to manage. But teaching is the only job I had, so I started reading on how to teach young learners, collaborate with senior teacher and doing classroom action research. I still doubt myself till today, I wonder whether I am being too soft to my students, some other teachers said so, but she tend to believe that is exactly what her students need.

While things that make her happy in teaching is when she listened to her students said “kata buk ros kan.../Mrs. Ros said that...”, indicating that they are believing her and base their action on what she said.

d. Whether They Find Teaching Is Fulfilling

When being asked whether they find teaching carrier is fulfilling, Mrs. R said:

“Yes, it astonishingly fulfilling”, and there is no way I would choose another job because I am happy with this job. I have met other teachers that find teaching is a burden for them. I never think that teaching is a burden, even at the end of the day I feel really tired but I am happy. Today this job is even better, because it guarantee your life. The ‘sertifikasi’ system is really promising. Teaching is not as miserable as it used to be. when I first started teaching, I only got Rp. 100.000/ month (hundred thousand rupiah)”.

When Mr. B was asked whether he find teaching is fulfilling or not. He said

“Yes, of course, I love my job and I will continue to teach after I retired if I could. So it is impossible that I will shift my teaching career. “

While Mrs. A believes that teaching is fulfilling,

“For the last six years, I’ve always teach first graders. At first teaching was a burden for me, se I teach first graders. At the end of the days I feel exhausted because to teach first graders have to walk around, deal with their various needs, and sometimes even to hold them when they cry. But then after a few years he found that teaching is joyful for her. Dealing with first graders she has to be their second mother and she find it gives me the feeling of content. My favorite word from my students is “kata buk ros kan.../Mrs. Ros said that...). I believe that this is proof that my students believe me. And I am grateful that I chose to be teacher and I will continue to do so.

2. Discussion

Discussion on teachers’ job satisfaction often includes the question of whether or not they love their profession. This love may have come with many synonyms such as pride or joy. The interview result showed that the three teachers love of their job. This love is particularly pronounced when they said “I think my job is very valuable and I’m doing something for this job.” Or “I love my job because I love to communicate with people” or “I think that my job is very important.....but also very enjoyable.” Jackson (2012) explain that in teaching it is really important for teachers to love who she is teaching, what she is teaching, and how she is teaching. If in reality teachers resent one of the three things above, it will make their teaching impaired. While according to Tracy & Robins (2007) pride is oftentimes associated with feelings of joy, meaningfulness and increased self-esteem. Additionally, employees are proud because they believe their roles are essential to the organization they work for and the community (Gouthier & Rhein, 2011). These feelings are expected to mirror teachers’ teaching practices in class and at the end influence job satisfaction.

The interview result indicated that teachers are doing their best to teach their students and at the same time to shape their personality. It shows from teacher focusing on transforming, changing and protecting students’ way of seeing themselves. The teacher believes in, not only teaching the content knowledge but also “akhlak” as a focus of their teaching. These beliefs also suggested as transformative learning, which according to Collins et al. (2002) is when teachers not only transferring knowledge but also transmitting values they hold dear to themselves.

Mrs. A believes that teaching first graders is a very delicate issue. These very young students are about to go out from their comfortable area where they have everything they need and support from parents into the world of classroom that they barely know about. So that in teaching first graders, teachers need to understand them. Sometimes she has to be teacher, sitter, mother, or psychic. The most important thing the first graders teachers have to do is to shape students’ belief on themselves. Teachers have to make them believe that they can do anything as long as they try. Collins et al. (2002) stated that learning happen in a process that is active and interactive, set within the context of warm and nurturing relationship. Moreover, teachers of young learners as their first social assessor, shape students judgment of themselves, and this judgment last, if it is not forever, affected the way they see themselves (Jackson, 2012).

The three teachers interviewed were kind of “fall off:” into teaching carrier. Two of the three interviewees chose teaching profession simply because this job is available in term of economic benefit; the other teacher was “force” to be teacher because of change in regulation.

People in teaching profession have various reasons for their career choices. Watt, et al. (2014) stated that background experience, self-perception and views which constitute the duties and obligations as well as the values held by the teacher are influential to shape an individual's choice behavior regarding whether to take up a teaching career or not. Teachers' initial reason can affect a lot of thing in teaching. Watt, et al. (2014) added that teachers motive in choosing teaching carrier will affect The amount of effort they will expend in doing the job, the length of time they plan to stay in teaching, the extent to which they will engage in professional learning to develop and maintain their career, and their level of satisfaction with their career choice.

Although the above study suggests that many teachers enter teacher education by deliberate decision, other studies provide evidence that many teachers enter teacher education essentially by chance (Richter et al., 2021). Neither study suggested which reason teachers choose, will define their satisfaction to the job since a lot of factors can influence job satisfaction. Despite these teachers reason into becoming teacher are only by chances, in order to be best at what they do, these teachers are willing learn. Ms. R is willing to learn using technology in teaching, Mr. B is attending seminars and Mrs. A is reading books about teaching. This indicates that they have every intention to be a better teacher.

The three teachers interviewed perceived that their intentions to choose teaching carrier are not sincere, since they did not plan to be teacher or because teaching is their ambition, but the salary factor and economical factor may influence their decision. Any job or occupation may promise a salary or income, as well as teacher's job. Laws also provided to guide and protect teachers' right in order for them to get income. According to the Teacher and Lecturer Law Number 14 of 2005 Chapter III Article VII, point 1 stated that "Teacher earn income in accordance to working achievement" (Depdiknas, 2007). There is nothing unusual or "insincere" about wanting to work to get an income, as long as the teachers are doing their job and doing their best.

Things teachers criticize in their teaching and things that make them happy in teaching is another thing that influences job satisfaction. The first step to start improving teaching is recognizing that there are problem to criticize in their teaching and then find a way to make it up. The three teachers said that they have something they criticize in their teaching: Mrs. A was not able to use computer so she learnt how to use one, Mr. B was fixated on how small the income he earnt back then, but later on seminars and teachers meeting he followed were helping him changing the way he view teaching profession, Mrs. A was reluctant to teach first grade of elementary school at the beginning, then she started reading on how to teach young learners, collaborate with senior teacher and doing classroom action research to change her mind. There are two kind of professional development program; formal professional development and less formal professional development (OECD, 2013). The three teachers are definitely were having a little bit of both of these development programs. These efforts are made to improve the professional career growth of a teacher and to find out whether the abilities, expertise and skills of teachers meet the current educational demands. These professional development programs have two levels of effect: an effect on teaching practices and an effect on teacher' levels of job satisfaction (OECD, 2013).

The three teachers definitely find something they love in teaching; Mrs. R love spending time with her students, Mr. B love to know that he was doing something good and helping the students, Mrs. A love when her student said "Mrs. Ros said that..." indicating that students are believing her and base their action on what she said. Jackson (2012) stated that to be a good teacher, somebody has to love who she/he teaching, what she/he is teaching and how she/he is teaching. Hopefully loving one dimension of these three will lead teacher to love another. These things that teachers love was said to have relationship with job satisfaction and self-efficacy. Having one aspect you like in your job is greatly influenced by teachers' sense of efficacy or the feeling that they are successful in their work. The higher the level of self-efficacy owned by an employee, the higher the level of job satisfaction. On the other hand, if an employee has a low level of self-efficacy, then an employee's job satisfaction will also decrease (Putri & Wibawa, 2016)

In term of job satisfaction, the three teachers, without a doubt are satisfied with their job. Mrs. R stated "teaching is astonishingly fulfilling", Mr. B said "Of course, I love my job", while Mrs. A said "It gives me the feeling of content". Job satisfaction is very important since

according to Butt (2005) teacher who are satisfied with the aspects of their jobs that related to their teaching work, such as work tasks and professional growth, they tend to be satisfied with other aspects surrounding the performance of their job – for example, working conditions, interpersonal relations and salary and hopefully the other way around. The other point being discussed in relation to job satisfaction is about the influence of the teachers' satisfaction on their performance quality as a teacher. Ngimbudzi stated (2009) that teachers feel satisfied when they get job security, in this case a salary somewhere (at the school they currently teach) and feel that the teacher is doing something good and helping students. Teachers' satisfaction with their existence and knowledge will definitely make them perform optimally in teaching.

Job satisfaction shapes teacher character, encourages teachers to work well and reminds them to stay sincere. Influence from job satisfaction on the teaching profession is to encourage teachers to think positively. This is a good thing because negative views of the teaching profession, both by society as a whole and by teachers themselves, can result in the placement of high-quality professionals into the teaching profession. This can also influence whether teachers will continue to carry out their profession (OECD, 2013; Blömeke et al., 2017; Klassen & Chiu, 2011). As the three teachers conveyed: “.....and there is no way I would choose another job because I am happy with this job, “..... it is impossible that I will shift my teaching career. “, “And I am grateful that I chose to be teacher and I will continue to do so.”

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of this research is to find out what teachers believe about job satisfaction in their teaching profession. The interview result showed that the three teachers love of their job. The teacher believes in, not only teaching the content knowledge but also “akhlak” and personality as a focus of their teaching. The three teachers interviewed perceived that their intentions to choose teaching carrier are not sincere, since they did not plan to be teacher or because teaching is their ambition; the salary factor and economical factor may influence their decision, but the interview result indicated that once the teachers face their students, they are doing their best to teach them and at the same time to shape their personality. The teachers realized that there a things need to be fixed in their teaching and have definitely things they love in teaching. In term of job satisfaction, the three teachers are satisfied with their job. Mrs. R stated “teaching is astonishingly fulfilling”, while the other two teachers expressed their satisfaction in similar manner. They also stated their willingness to stay in the profession.

Teaching is not a simple job; it is very complex and multifaceted. Teachers have to work very hard to improve themselves so they can be better. No matter what their reasons are, whether it is their ambition or it just a choice available for them. Students are very different to one another, techniques and method change all the time, technology also change, so teachers need to race this change so they would not left behind. A good teacher is a teacher who is willing to keep learning and always improving.

Every working teacher hopes to get satisfaction from their place of work. Basically, job satisfaction is an individual thing because each individual will have a different level of satisfaction according to the values that apply within each individual. The more aspects of the job that suit the individual's desires, the higher the level of satisfaction felt. This will enable teacher to perform better as a teacher and at the end will be able to regenerate generation not only abundant in knowledge but also rich in personality.

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