



Exploring Early Career Teacher Attrition and Career Switching in Higher Education: A Narrative Study

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Abstract

Teacher attrition and career switching from teaching to non-teaching professions are global phenomena in the field of education. Empirical evidence shows that almost 50% of early career school teachers voluntarily leave teaching within five years. This qualitative study examines the narratives of two former Bangladeshi private university lecturers who reluctantly left teaching after five (lecturer A) and four years (lecturer B) respectively of full-time university teaching. Using Smith and Ulvik's conceptual framework, which thematizes the case of leaving teaching in a four-stage process (i.e., pre-teaching career thought, entry, primary experience, and exit), this study employs a pathogenic perspective of teacher attrition and collects teaching leavers' narratives. The data analysis utilizes Connelly and Clandinin's three tools of narrative analysis: broadening, burrowing, and re-storing. The findings and implications are discussed.

Keywords: Private University, University Teacher, Teacher Attrition, Bangladesh, Leaving Teaching, Narrative Inquiry

INTRODUCTION

The role of teachers in shaping the educational and personal development of their students cannot be overstated. They are the unsung heroes behind the scenes, shaping the future of the younger generation. Several studies and reports have underlined this critical function (Rowan et al., 1997; Biesta, 2020; Ulug et al., 2011; Lee & Loeb, 2000), emphasizing that teachers are more than just conduits of knowledge; they are agents of change and there are success models of teachers who matter even more (Alam et al., 2023). Their impact goes beyond the classroom, influencing society at large.

However, a dark cloud looms over the educational landscape - teacher attrition. The loss of teachers from the profession has become a pressing challenge globally, with far-reaching implications for students and the education system as a whole (Pitsoe, 2013). The UNESCO report in 1996, citing attrition rates ranging from 5% to 30%, painted a worrying picture (Macdonald, 1999). More recent research reveals an alarming trend, especially within the first five years of a teacher's career, where attrition rates can surge as high as 30% to 50% (Carlsson et al., 2019). Moreover, the financial cost of this attrition is staggering, with estimates suggesting a \$12,546 burden on school systems for each teacher who leaves (Borman and Dowling, 2008).

This vexing issue of teacher attrition has sparked a wealth of research over the years (Macdonald, 1999; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Marshall et al., 2022). Nonetheless, much of this research has homed in on early career teachers in primary and secondary schools in Western contexts, like the United

States, the Netherlands, Australia, and various European countries (e.g., den Brok, 2017; Fantilli & McDougal, 2014; Heikkinen et al., 2012; Lindqvist et al., 2014; Madigan & Kim, 2021; Rodriguez et al., 2020). Surprisingly, one segment of educators that has remained relatively underexplored in the teacher attrition discourse is university teachers.

The absence of research on teacher attrition among university faculty is concerning, especially as universities are pivotal in shaping the future of nations. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed the plight of private university lecturers in Bangladesh, with news articles highlighting dismissals, wage reductions, and excessive workloads (Jasim, 2020, July 27). However, such disruptions can't be solely blamed for teacher attrition among university lecturers. Private university teachers in Bangladesh are evidently leaving the profession, while their counterparts in public universities persist. This divergence in career choices merits a closer look.

The study's endeavor to delve into the narratives of private university lecturers who departed from teaching to pursue alternative careers provides a much-needed perspective on this phenomenon. These individual stories offer unique insights into the multifaceted factors that influence teacher attrition, which go beyond mere economic or external pressures. The research is not just an exercise in statistics and data; it humanizes a systemic issue, allowing us to understand the deeply personal and professional struggles that underlie attrition decisions.

The findings of this study hold relevance for policymakers, university administrators, and faculty members. It is not

merely an academic exercise; it has the potential to reshape policies, practices, and attitudes toward teacher retention in the context of higher education in Bangladesh. Furthermore, this research emphasizes the importance of considering teachers in universities, a group that has often been overshadowed in discussions on teacher attrition. By shining a light on their stories, it underscores the need for a more comprehensive and nuanced approach to understanding and addressing teacher attrition in the broader educational landscape. The implications are far-reaching, not only for Bangladesh but for any society that values the role of educators in nurturing its future citizens.

OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH INQUIRIES

The current study seeks to understand why lecturers choose to teach at private universities, explore the positive aspects of teaching in this context, and uncover why some lecturers leave to pursue other careers. The research is guided by these key questions:

1. What motivates private university lecturers to teach at the tertiary level?
2. What do lecturers find satisfying about teaching at private universities?
3. Why do some private university lecturers leave teaching and opt for alternative careers?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical perspectives on teacher attrition serve as critical frameworks for understanding the complex issue of educators leaving the field of education. Kelchtermans (2017) provides one perspective, highlighting teacher attrition as an “educational” problem, underlining the importance of retaining qualified teachers to uphold educational quality. This viewpoint drives research efforts aimed at pinpointing the root causes of attrition and seeking remedies to address it, as evident in the work of Ingersoll (2001).

Conversely, the pathogenic perspective offers an alternative lens, viewing teacher attrition as a consequence of the negative aspects prevalent within the teaching profession (Yinon & Orland-Barak, 2017). This perspective, often the predominant one, delves into the factors that erode the enthusiasm of educators and contribute to attrition.

Moreover, the salutogenic perspective takes a unique approach, characterizing teacher attrition as a matter of teachers’ “career decision.” It acknowledges that teachers’ choices are influenced by a variety of contextual factors, including their perception of the teaching profession, their expectations, the cultural environment within which they work, and more. Zhu et al. (2020) further categorize these influences as “tales to live by” and “stories to leave by,” emphasizing the narratives that shape educators’ career trajectories.

To investigate the reasons behind Bangladeshi private university lecturers’ decisions to leave teaching, this study draws from these theoretical perspectives and themes identified by Smith and Ulvik (2017). These themes encompass (i) teachers’ imagined life, encompassing their perceptions and passion for teaching; (ii) the decision-making process in choosing a teaching career, including motivations; (iii) teachers’ personal landscape, reflecting their experiences within the profession; and (iv) the factors that contribute to the decision to leave teaching, often linked to disillusionment. By integrating these perspectives and themes, the study aims to offer a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted dynamics surrounding teacher attrition in the context of private universities in Bangladesh.

Why Do Individuals Become Teachers?

The literature on teacher attrition highlights the multifaceted nature of motivations driving individuals to pursue teaching careers. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors play significant roles, as evidenced by prior research (Watt & Richardson, 2008; Heffernan et al., 2019; Roness & Smith, 2010; Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016). Intrinsic motivations, such as the desire to make an educational impact, personal growth, societal contribution, and altruism, emerge as primary drivers. Additionally, pedagogical and experiential aspects, including a passion for the subject matter, the act of teaching, self-perceived teaching skills, and favorable prior teaching experiences, are noted motivators, drawing from the work of Watt et al. (2012).

Gu and Day (2013) emphasize the powerful role of the desire to improve students’ lives, underlining the altruistic and social benefits that draw individuals to teaching. However, in developed nations like Australia, Germany, Norway, and the USA, motivations to enter the teaching profession may also encompass extrinsic factors such as job stability, compensation, and achieving a work-life balance (Watt et al., 2012). Longitudinal studies, like those by Watt and Richardson (2008), reveal a spectrum of teacher motivations, ranging from those who consider teaching a lifelong “calling” to those who view it as a profession to “test out” for a few years, and therefore, for them it is not their, as Alam and Asmawi (2023) sort out, ‘identity salience’. The dichotomy further extends to categories like “engaged per sisters” who remain in teaching and “competence nomads” who leave despite their competence, with studies (Niknafs, 2020; Karlsen, 2019) suggesting that intrinsic motivations and a desire for new challenges often underpin decisions to exit the profession.

A notable limitation in the existing literature is its predominant focus on school teachers in affluent nations, leaving the motivations of educators in private universities in developing country contexts largely unexplored. The current study seeks to fill this gap.

Why Do Teachers Leave Teaching?

The issue of teachers leaving the teaching profession has garnered considerable attention from scholars and researchers, and various factors have been identified as key drivers in this phenomenon. Marshall et al. (2022) conducted a recent literature review, revealing a startling trend where a significant majority of teachers surveyed contemplated leaving their profession during the 2022-23 academic year, with over half considering positions outside the field of education. Overwhelming workload, persistent stress, and insufficient support from administrators and parents were commonly cited reasons behind these contemplations, in line with previous studies highlighting workload as a significant factor (Gu & Day, 2013).

The literature further underscores that salary is a primary cause of teachers leaving their roles, as job satisfaction and professional standing are closely tied to their pay. Adequate compensation is crucial for both new and experienced teachers, with studies emphasizing that additional financial incentives can contribute to retaining teachers in the profession. Conversely, low pay and a lack of professional prestige are linked to teachers seeking better-paying non-teaching positions, emphasizing the pivotal role compensation plays in teacher attrition.

Beyond financial and prestige-related factors, environmental considerations also significantly influence teachers' decisions to exit the profession. Various dimensions of school environments, including professional, collegial, interpersonal, managerial, organizational, cultural, and resource-related aspects, all impact teachers' choices. Issues such as a lack of autonomy, extreme job-related exhaustion, and job insecurity within the teaching profession contribute to teachers leaving (Cha & Cohen-Vogel, 2011; Goddard et al., 2006). Resource-related problems, like outdated teaching materials and subpar classroom conditions, further contribute to teacher dissatisfaction (Buchanan, 2010; Davies & Hughes, 2018). Strained interpersonal and professional relationships with students, colleagues, and administrators are another factor that influences teachers' decisions to remain in the profession.

Moreover, the managerial performance of schools, as well as their interactions with teachers in terms of feedback, recognition, and awards, can sway a teacher's choice to stay in the profession or seek alternatives. A lack of a cooperative and collaborative school culture has also been identified as a contributing factor to teachers quitting their positions (Madero, 2019). These multiple and complex issues have significant implications for teachers' career decisions and ultimately contribute to the attrition rates in the teaching profession.

Process of Leaving Teaching

The process of teachers leaving the profession is well-documented in scholarly literature, revealing distinct

phases that educators commonly traverse before making the pivotal decision to leave. Gallant and Riley (2014) offer a comprehensive four-part framework to outline this trajectory. It commences with an initial phase characterized by enthusiasm and hopefulness when educators first enter the profession. This is followed by a period of stagnation and frustration, particularly during the early years of teaching, as the initial zeal may give way to the harsh realities of the profession. Subsequently, a phase of disillusionment and dissatisfaction typically sets in, which often serves as a turning point, leading to the final phase where the decision to leave the teaching profession is made.

The narratives of teachers themselves, reflecting their personal experiences and journeys, offer the most detailed and nuanced descriptions of this intricate process. In the context of this specific study, former private university lecturers share their perspectives across each of these phases, providing valuable insights into the factors and experiences that influenced their decisions to leave teaching. These firsthand accounts offer a rich and authentic perspective on the complexities and challenges faced by teachers as they navigate through these phases, ultimately contributing to the attrition phenomenon.

The Narrative Design

Understanding the complex nature of teacher attrition necessitates a qualitative approach because relying solely on quantitative data fails to capture the nuanced, context-specific aspects of this phenomenon. Scholars like Yinon and Orland-Barak (2017) and Clandinin et al. (2015) emphasize the importance of exploring the contextual factors that underlie teacher attrition within a qualitative framework. In the context of Bangladesh, a developing nation where private university lecturers are leaving teaching positions for non-teaching careers, this study, therefore, employs a narrative inquiry which is one of the major types of qualitative research.

Narrative inquiry, as per Polkinghorne (1995), is a qualitative research method that examines individuals' experiences as stories over time. Barkhuizen (2011) further elaborates on its utility in delving into the intricate details of localized issues, such as teacher attrition. A career path, like teaching, can be effectively elucidated by tracing the decisions to enter the profession, the actions taken to pursue it, the duration spent in the field, and the eventual decision to leave it. Therefore, a narrative study offers a suitable method to illustrate this trajectory, as it has been predominantly employed in deciphering why educators decide to abandon teaching (e.g., Harfitt, 2015; Smith & Ulvik, 2017; Amitai & Van Houtte, 2022).

In essence, this qualitative narrative inquiry approach is well-suited to unravel the intricate web of factors and experiences that lead private university lecturers in Bangladesh to transition from teaching to non-teaching careers. It is

particularly valuable in unpacking the idiosyncrasies of this phenomenon within the local context and 'local alternatives' (Alam et al., 2022), ultimately contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of teacher attrition in the developing world.

Inviting Participants to Narrate Their Departure from Teaching

The study involved a qualitative approach where the lead researcher recruited two participants, referred to as Lecturer A and Lecturer B (pseudonyms), with whom the researcher had established regular interactions. Privacy and anonymity were ensured through the use of aliases, and both participants willingly agreed to share their experiences of leaving the teaching profession.

Lecturer A, who left teaching at the age of 28, brought a unique perspective to the study. He had accumulated a total of nine years of teaching experience, starting as a Physics and Mathematics tutor while still a student and later transitioning into a regular university lecturer. His teaching career was backed by a Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree from a prominent engineering and technology university in Bangladesh. Throughout his tenure as an educator, he had achieved research success with three articles that received citations, indicating a blend of teaching and academic contributions. Notably, at the time of leaving the teaching profession, he was concurrently pursuing an MSc in Civil Engineering and held the role of a senior lecturer while coordinating the BSc in Civil Engineering program at a private university in Bangladesh.

Lecturer B, on the other hand, decided to step away from teaching at the age of 35 after four years as an English literature instructor at a private university in Bangladesh. Her career trajectory took an interesting turn, as she had previously worked for an NGO for a year, following her academic journey that included Bachelor's and two Master's degrees in English obtained from universities in Bangladesh and India. After departing from teaching, she chose to return to the NGO sector.

These two participants, with their distinct backgrounds, experiences, and motivations for leaving teaching, provide a rich source of data for the study. Their narratives are likely to shed light on the multifaceted factors that influence educators' decisions to exit the teaching profession and pursue alternative career paths. This qualitative approach allows for a deep exploration of their individual experiences and the broader context of teacher attrition within private universities in Bangladesh.

Collecting Stories

The researchers in this study took measures to employ triangulation, a methodological approach aimed at enhancing the validity and reliability of the research findings. To ensure diverse perspectives, lecturers from two different academic

fields, engineering and arts, were selected as participants. Furthermore, a gender balance was maintained by choosing one male and one female lecturer.

Data collection was conducted through a combination of written and spoken narratives. The written narratives were obtained from the participants through email, and specific research topics and instructions were provided to guide them in structuring their responses. The participants then provided typewritten accounts detailing their experiences and perspectives, a method that allowed for structured and reflective responses.

In addition to written narratives, semi-structured interviews were conducted with both participants, Lecturer A and Lecturer B. These interviews sought to delve deeper into their teaching experiences, perceptions, motivations, and the factors that led to their decision to leave teaching. The interviews took place over two separate sessions, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the subject matter. The use of English as the language of communication was practical, as both participants were fluent in the language.

The data collection process concluded with an expression of gratitude to the participants for their invaluable contribution to the study. By employing both written narratives and interviews, the researchers were able to gain a well-rounded understanding of the complex motivations and experiences that underlie lecturers' decisions to transition from teaching to alternative careers. Triangulation of data sources and participant selection added depth and richness to the study, enhancing the credibility of the findings.

Analyzing Stories

Following the guidance of Clandinin and Connelly (2004), the initial raw data in the form of narratives was systematically organized into a structured research text. The researchers then engaged in a process known as researcher triangulation, as suggested by Thurmond (2001). This involved multiple researchers independently examining and analyzing the data to ensure robustness and reliability in the interpretation.

The analysis of the data followed a framework proposed by Connelly and Clandinin (1990), which consists of three distinct stages: broadening, burrowing, and re-storying. In the broadening stage, the researchers aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the storytellers' emotions and values in relation to teaching as a vocation. This phase focused on exploring the broader context and overarching themes within the narratives.

The burrowing stage involved a deeper and more detailed analysis of the stories. Here, the researchers delved into the experiences of the teaching leavers, seeking to uncover the underlying reasons for their growing disillusionment and eventual decision to resign from teaching. This stage allowed for a nuanced examination of the progression of disappointment and the factors contributing to teachers leaving the profession.

Finally, in the re-storying stage, the researchers collaboratively worked to reconstruct and retell the stories of the teaching leavers. This process involved responding to the study's research questions by reshaping and reinterpreting the narratives in a way that addressed the overarching research objectives.

The adoption of this structured approach to data analysis, which encompasses various stages of interpretation and reflection, ensured a thorough and in-depth examination of the experiences and motivations of the participants. It not only facilitated a deeper understanding of the factors contributing to teacher attrition but also enhanced the rigor and credibility of the research findings.

FINDINGS

Story of Former Lecturer A

Thread (I): Pre-teaching career thought, characterized by optimism and perception

Lecturer A's pre-teaching career thought was marked by optimism and strong perceptions. Despite the fact that teaching was a low-compensated profession, A's long-held desire to become a teacher outweighed this concern. Moreover, his desire to follow in the footsteps of his teacher father and the nobility of the teaching profession reinforced his decision to pursue this career. A recounts his strong perception in his mind, which he developed during his schooling, to become a teacher. He states, "Actually, I belonged to strong perception in my mind from my schooling life to become a teacher following the footprint of my father as my father is a school teacher." While acknowledging his father's financial struggles on a low salary, A was determined not to give up his dream and desire to become a teacher, citing the nobility of teaching as a profession, life's dream, achieving higher studies, and self-knowledge increase, as well as life security. A's pre-service teaching experience further strengthened his desire to become a teacher.

A's perception of teaching as a valuable profession was multifaceted. He placed great abstract value on teaching, believing it transformed children into moral, ethical, and enlightened beings. He also viewed teachers as key players in a country's development and perceived university teaching as a tool for societal advancement and the teacher's self-knowledge development. As he stated, "I was starting realizing the significance of teaching profession as the promoter of ethics and morality between human beings, enlightening people... Besides, a teacher can play a vital role in building up a decent, polite and upright nation through his/her teaching.... I strongly believed that a university is the source of sharing knowledge, strengthening the subjective knowledge, mutual dignity, and respect."

For A, teaching was a call, and he was particularly drawn to the prestige and status of university teaching. Initially influenced by the status and prestige of university teaching,

he gradually became more attracted to the nobility of teaching as a profession and discovered his potential as a teacher. As he notes, "Firstly, I was influenced by the status of university teaching, prestige of the profession. But with time I was also attracted by following nobility of teaching as a profession... by my ability to teach..."

Thread (II): Specification of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation behind entering university teaching

Lecturer A's journey into university teaching was delayed due to a physical issue. In 2016, he finally had the chance to start working as a lecturer at a private university. Out of 44 applicants, he was chosen after a fair but difficult selection procedure that included a written exam, a viva, and a demonstration class.

At the time of taking his post, A ascribed an abstract value to university teaching as a distinguished career and a chance to advance one's self-knowledge and contribute to society. He had a strong sense of intrinsic motivation. "I considered status of university teaching, prestige of the profession, love for students, enjoyment of students' learning process, scope for using your subject knowledge, self-knowledge increase, nobility of teaching as a profession, good public perception of teaching; desire to make social contribution in nation building..."

From his university lectures, he had a clear expectation that was typical and extrinsic. He anticipated getting paid enough to get by. He believed he would receive post-retirement benefits, flexible working hours, and acknowledgment for his qualifications, and other financial rewards like a PF fund, gratuity, incentives, and post-retirement benefits. "Definitely, I expected job security, honorarium including salary along with income to survive nicely, ... gradual promotion... flexibility and working hours, recognition of extra qualifications, reward for good teaching, other financial benefits such as PF fund, gratuity, incentive, post-retirement benefits and so on."

Thread (III): Primary experience as a beginning lecturer, professional development efforts to stay firmly in university teaching, teaching success and major reasons for the five-year teaching

Lecturer A's journey as a university teacher was marked by a deep connection with his students, a commitment to their success, and a sense of fulfillment. He established a positive rapport with his students, resulting in their support, cooperation, and respect. This conducive learning environment he fostered led to departmental growth, increased student enrollment, and a strong sense of accomplishment. In his own words, he described his ability to create a cooperative relationship between students and teachers, enjoying the love, respect, and cooperation of his students, which contributed to the department's success.

Apart from teaching, A took on additional responsibilities such as counseling, creative work, and program coordination,

which further solidified his reputation as a successful lecturer. His efforts were acknowledged by students and the university administration, leading to improved departmental standing, increased student enrollment, and ongoing communication with former students seeking his guidance.

Despite the positive aspects of his teaching experience, A faced various challenges, including job insecurity and low pay, which caused him significant frustration. Although he contemplated leaving the profession, his love for his students and their unwavering respect for him served as powerful motivators to persist in his role for over five years. He hoped that the issues he faced would be resolved, even though he acknowledged the deteriorating nature of his discontent.

A remained committed to his dream of a work environment characterized by high ethics, collaboration with highly educated management, and a strong sense of humanity, love, and respect. He aspired to professional advancement and pursued an MSc program while continuing his university teaching, aiming for continuous skill development and growth. His primary focus was on professional development and further academic qualifications, reflecting his dedication to his role as a university lecturer.

Thread (IV): Escalation of dissatisfaction and urge to leave teaching

Lecturer A began to consider leaving his teaching position at a private university due to his growing dissatisfaction with the job insecurity and mental unrest it caused. In response, he began preparing for a more secure government non-teaching job. As he explained, "Apart from this reason I was feeling lack of job security each and every time that was undermining me. Sometimes, it seemed to me that I was going to lose my job tomorrow; totally I was in an uncertain tough and rough situation full of mental unrest. So, from that feelings I was let me prepare getting a government job so that I could free from that uncertain and unsecure life."

A's dissatisfaction with the university management and administration increased as well. He was disappointed with the long working hours, excessive workload, lack of job security, flexibility, collegial issues, and lack of a two-day weekend. As he explained, "Actually, over workload, dissatisfaction level, unprofessional attitude of new recruited colleagues, unskilled management system, working period per day at university campus (8 hours), lack of two days' weekends, lack of working freedom, unskilled university administrative department, lack of job security, less flexibility and different dissatisfaction escalated my disillusion for teaching."

Despite his dedication to teaching, A found that the environmental, organizational, and professional negatives of his current position outweighed its merits. It is, as Alam and Asmawi (2023) maintain, professional navigation through different situations. This included his colleagues' resentment, delayed payment, lack of autonomy, unprofessional

management, lack of an annual salary increase, poor salary, excessive workload, long hours, lack of flexibility, lack of professional development, lack of recognition of additional qualifications, lack of compensation for effective teaching, and limited or no opportunities for advancement. As he concluded, "I deserve more; I have better salaried alternative career options."

Story of the Former Lecturer, B

Thread (I): Pre-teaching career thought, characterized by optimism and perception

Lecturer B held the view that teaching is a noble vocation, which is a widely shared belief in Bangladesh. As she puts it, "teaching profession is considered as a noble profession in Bangladesh and I had the same thought about it before joining as a teacher! Hahaha..." Moreover, she believed that university teaching provides an excellent opportunity for promoting intellectuality and living in a highbrow community. She saw it as a means of acquiring knowledge and wisdom every day, which would make her an expert in her subject area. Furthermore, she believed that university teaching provides an avenue for imparting good qualities to students. As she puts it, "...mostly to grow good qualities in another person using my learning."

Lecturer B also saw university teaching as a profession that commands respect and unconditional love from society. She believed that teachers are held in high esteem, and teaching at the university level could earn lecturers the love and respect of society. Her career goal of teaching at a private university was not long-held, but she was eventually inspired by the opinions of her NGO supervisor. She recalls the moment when her supervisor praised her communication skills and suggested that she would excel in academia. As she recounts, "when I talked, I saw people listened to me carefully, and noticing this, my supervisor in the NGO said once, 'You must be in academia! You are the right person for that area, and you'll shine there.'"

Thread (II): Specification of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation behind entering university teaching

In 2016, B was able to secure her coveted position as a university lecturer after a highly competitive selection process that attested to her qualifications. Despite the distance between her home and the university, B was highly motivated to pursue a career in university teaching. B's intrinsic motivation was derived from both personal and societal factors, and it reflected broader social and national concerns. The public perception of university teachers in Bangladesh is highly positive, and the profession is widely regarded as respectable and prestigious. Therefore, B was motivated to apply for this prestigious position. She also believed that her personality trait of enjoying conversing with others would be well-suited for university lecturing. Furthermore, B saw university teaching as an opportunity to contribute to social

welfare and nation-building through educating students. Her desire to pursue a career in university teaching was also influenced by the positive feedback and encouragement she received from others. As she stated, "In our country, teaching is regarded a highly respected job and when it comes to University teaching, it gives such an impression to people that university teacher is doing a very prestigious job!" B was driven by her passion for teaching and a desire to share her knowledge with others. She explained that "I have and had a desire to contribute in society because teaching gives such a chance to build up a nation through students. My known people always saw something in me as a teacher, so their positive vibe also motivated me."

B's extrinsic motivation was straightforward, with the expectation of a decent salary and standard job benefits. As she stated, "I am a minimalist person. I don't waste money on clothes or other luxury." Overall, B's intrinsic motivation, which was anchored in broader social and national concerns, was the primary driver for her pursuit of a career in university teaching, while her extrinsic motivation was more pragmatic and modest.

Thread (III): Primary experience as a beginning teacher, professional development efforts to stay firmly in university teaching, teaching success and major reasons for the four-year teaching career

Initially, lecturer B found great pleasure in teaching at a private university. She relished overcoming both the perceived and actual challenges of teaching and felt fulfilled as a lecturer in the classroom. As she explained, "The challenges are more like dealing with students and make sure they are getting the lesson perfectly...if they don't get the lesson, I used to think it's my failure as a teacher. But mostly, when they threw up the questions (unpredictable obviously) after the lecture, it was a great pleasure for me to make them satisfied with answers." She also admired the English department faculty members' collegial learning, collaboration, and togetherness. B appreciated her coworkers, who provided valuable support and shared their experiences and difficulties in the classroom. She said, "So, we together sorted out those. Learning from students and my coworkers are also what I enjoyed practically."

Furthermore, positive in-class experiences and good ratings from her students increased B's sense of enjoyment and success in teaching. She felt that her efforts had paid off when she heard from her students that they missed her classes after she left the job. B's hard work and dedication paid off when she was rated as a very good teacher by her students during a teacher evaluation conducted by the university. As she stated, "I think I was successful as I got to know from my students how they were my classes and also when I left the job, they said they missed my classes a lot. Once our university did a teacher's evaluation sending a form to the students and students rated me as a very good teacher."

For these reasons, B remained a teacher for four years. She took pleasure in seeing her students acquire knowledge and skills through her lectures, as it gave her immense satisfaction. As she said, "I stayed for 4 years almost in teaching and my passion and love for the job held me in it. I loved delivering lectures and classroom interaction with students, when students learned something from me and inspired by me to write a paper or do research, it gave me immense satisfaction."

B was also keen on furthering her professional growth. She participated in teacher education and out-of-university teacher training programs, wrote research articles and got them published, and prepared to apply for a PhD overseas. She worked hard to stay a teacher and improve her skills. She explained, "Well, I did several trainings and e-courses to develop my teaching skill at home and abroad. I wrote research articles and papers and presented in international conferences. I published papers in books and journals. I was trying for PhD or higher degree to stay in teaching."

Thread (IV): Escalation of dissatisfaction and urge to leave teaching

The discovery of a "pay disparity" at the university served as the catalyst for Lecturer B's loss of passion for teaching. Upon discovering that some of her colleagues, who were younger, less experienced, and held fewer degrees than she did, received higher salaries, she became disillusioned with the institution. She stated, "When I got to know some teachers were getting more salary than me though they have no pre-experience in teaching." Furthermore, her income was insufficient to support a university professional's standard of living, leading her to take on freelance work to supplement her earnings. She mentioned, "I could afford my cost somehow because I had earned from my freelancing works (translation, interpretation, editing, content writing etc.) and I also got financial support from my family members which I tried to avoid if I could!"

Despite her repeated requests, no wage increase was granted throughout the year. This left her feeling increasingly frustrated, particularly as she became aware that many of her peers in non-teaching jobs were earning much higher salaries. As a result, it became increasingly difficult for her to maintain her status as a respected university professor. "Also, when I realized it's difficult to get a decent life with this limited income when my known people or friends who don't have skills or experience like me but getting smart salary frustrated me," she expressed. She even went as far as raising the issue of salary and other facilities to the management, but it was ignored. "At one point, I raised the issue of salary and other facilities to management, but they ignored it. This made me so angry that I decided to leave asap."

Lecturer B was dissatisfied with her salary and the fact that she had not been promoted despite meeting all the necessary requirements. Her disappointment was compounded when

festival bonuses were discontinued during the COVID-19 pandemic. Her workday became longer, and she began to feel that job security was lacking. "I did not get promotion though all requirements I fulfilled, but the reasons shown to me were ridiculous!... I used to get two festival bonuses, but that's also stopped since the COVID-19 pandemic," she said. She even believed that the myth of teaching being a less stressful profession than others was untrue. "Truly speaking, there is no job security... Another myth is there which I really believed before coming to this job that is teachers can get more relax, free time and have less stress than other professionals. But in reality, I found it an absolutely wrong idea." She left her position, but her provident funds, which were deducted from her salary every month, have yet to be paid to her.

During COVID-19, when the well-being of teachers was disregarded, her disillusionment grew. She was required to physically attend the university even during lockdown and requested flexible working hours due to health risks, but the authorities did not heed her concerns. "So I demanded for flexible working hour and also raised the health risk for COVID-19 which may increase if I go to office regularly.... So, I wanted to continue classes from home as its online. Authority didn't pay heed to it."

Finally, when her trust with the management was broken and her self-dignity was compromised, her disillusionment reached an unbearable level. She required an experience certificate to apply for scholarships overseas, but the university administration accused her of deceit and refused to provide it. As a result, she resigned from her position, stating, "Authority and registrar office did not want to provide me that document willingly rather they suspected I had intention to move on for a new job and trying to trick them. After all my loyalty and service in the institution, such behavior was unexpected. So, for my self-dignity I decided to leave the job."

DISCUSSION

The present study investigates the quitting behavior of private university lecturers, A and B, and explores the reasons behind their decision to leave teaching. The study utilizes the four-stage career quitting model proposed by Smith and Ulvik (2017) and Gallant and Riley (2014, p. 562), which includes perception and passion for teaching, reason for entering teaching, experiencing teaching, and abandoning teaching. The authors note that the pathogenic perspective, as explained by Yinon and Orland-Barak (2017), provides a framework for understanding the negativity associated with private university teaching and its effect on quitting.

The study identifies two categories of teachers who leave teaching: "engaged persisters," who continue teaching throughout their lives (long-termism), and those who try teaching for a short period of time (short-termism) and, even if they are successful, leave teaching. The two former private

university lecturers examined in this study, however, fall into a third category. They began teaching from the perspective of long-termism as engaged persisters, but the numerous negatives in the profession turned them into "competence nomads" as they left teaching to pursue non-teaching positions after a short period of four or five years.

The study notes that both lecturers A and B entered the classroom with high intrinsic motivation, which is typical of school teachers worldwide (Watt & Richardson, 2008; Heffernan et al., 2019; Roness & Smith, 2010; Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016). According to the literature, factors that relate to intrinsic motivation include educational, experienced, social, and altruistic factors. The study finds that both lecturers emphasized the nobility of teaching as a social cause for their choosing teaching and as a vehicle for the growth of self and society. Altruistic and social benefit motivations were also found to be significant factors that push people to school teaching (Watt et al., 2012, cited in Smith & Ulvik, 2017). Furthermore, the study reveals that lecturer A made a self-selection of university teaching out of his long-held passion for the profession, while lecturer B took up university teaching following a social selection suggested by her NGO supervisor and others.

In certain developed nations such as Germany, Norway, and the United States, financial gain is not the primary motivating factor for individuals who pursue careers in the teaching profession; they are content with decent salaries (Watt & Richardson, 2008; Heffernan et al., 2019; Roness & Smith, 2010; Reeves & Lowenhaupt, 2016). The private university lecturers participating in this study did not enter teaching for monetary gain either, despite receiving low salaries that did not cover their basic expenses. Both lecturers were committed to the growth of their teaching careers and participated in teacher training and further education to achieve their career aspirations, which is a reason why individuals choose teaching as a profession (Watt et al., 2012 cited in Smith & Ulvik, 2017). They relied on internal motivation to remain positive and believed that they were making a difference in their students' lives (Gu and Day, 2013). Their unwavering commitment to their students, who reciprocated with love, respect, and success, enabled them to continue teaching for four to five years.

However, both lecturers eventually lost hope in their prospects as private university lecturers due to the multiple setbacks of the profession. Promotion, which is a significant motivator for university teachers to remain in the profession (Cook et al., 2009; Oleschuk, 2020), was not identified as a reason to quit by school teachers (Weiqi, 2007). Nonetheless, the present study reveals that the decision of university professors to abandon teaching was influenced by their inability to progress.

The quality of interpersonal relationships at work is often a critical factor in determining how long teachers remain in the classroom (Beahm et al., 2021; Dempsey et al., 2021;

Kim & Asbury, 2020). This study indicates that different departments have varying collegial relationship dynamics. While lecturer B of the English department was delighted with the camaraderie among colleagues, lecturer A of the civil department was troubled by the hostility in the department.

The reprehensible conduct of the university administration was a source of revulsion for both lecturers. The behavioral and interpersonal factors exhibited by the university management that contributed to their decision to terminate their university teaching careers resulted in the erosion of their mutual trust and the compromise of their dignity. Earlier research findings indicate that similar concerns relating to school management also impact the decision of school teachers to remain in the profession (Liu & Werblow, 2019; Skaalvik&Skaalvik, 2018; Menon & Brackin, 2021; Zakariya, 2020).

Prior research reports (Xuehui, 2018; Suderajat&Rojuaniah, 2021) have established that high status and remuneration incentivizes teachers to remain in the profession while low status and inadequate pay negatively affect job satisfaction and prompt individuals to leave the profession in favor of non-teaching occupations that offer higher salaries (Marshall et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2020; Qin, 2021; Geiger & Pivovarova, 2018). This study reveals that although university lecturers are content with the high status of university teaching, they leave private university teaching due to dissatisfaction with their pay and other financial benefits such as provident fund, retirement benefits, incentives, etc.

In addition to highlighting the challenges inherent in private university teaching, this study also demonstrates that both lecturers possessed considerable capital and expertise, which made them confident of securing greater opportunities in non-teaching careers than what private university teaching had to offer.

IMPLICATIONS

The following significant implications can be inferred from the narratives of the two former private university lecturers: The concerned authorities should acknowledge and address the issue of early career teacher attrition in private universities and implement measures to retain committed and successful lecturers. Efforts should be made to increase the extrinsic motivators for private university lecturers. Salary adjustments should be made to enhance the competitiveness of private university teaching positions with other non-teaching positions. Private universities must standardize their promotion policies and procedures for lecturers. In order to create a more teacher-friendly environment in private universities, the performance of the university management needs to be improved. Private universities should foster a culture of collegial cooperation among their staff members.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

As the present study is limited by its focus on the experiences of only two former private university lecturers, and therefore, the findings are not generalizable. To establish a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of early career teacher attrition in private universities in Bangladesh, it is recommended that a quantitative investigation be conducted to provide an objective assessment.

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