

UNIVERSITY OF MALTA
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

**An Investigation into the Attraction and Rejection Factors to the
Teaching Profession: A Maltese Case Study**

Jessica Aquilina

A dissertation presented in Faculty of Education at the University of Malta for the degree of
Master in Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Education.

June 2023



L-Università
ta' Malta

University of Malta Library – Electronic Thesis & Dissertations (ETD) Repository

The copyright of this thesis/dissertation belongs to the author. The author's rights in respect of this work are as defined by the Copyright Act (Chapter 415) of the Laws of Malta or as modified by any successive legislation.

Users may access this full-text thesis/dissertation and can make use of the information contained in accordance with the Copyright Act provided that the author must be properly acknowledged. Further distribution or reproduction in any format is prohibited without the prior permission of the copyright holder.



FACULTY/INSTITUTE/CENTRE/SCHOOL. Faculty of Education

DECLARATIONS BY POSTGRADUATE STUDENTS

(a) Authenticity of Dissertation

I hereby declare that I am the legitimate author of this Dissertation and that it is my original work.

No portion of this work has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or institution of higher education.

I hold the University of Malta harmless against any third-party claims with regard to copyright violation, breach of confidentiality, defamation and any other third party right infringement.

(b) Research Code of Practice and Ethics Review Procedures

I declare that I have abided by the University's Research Ethics Review Procedures. Research Ethics & Data Protection form code. EDUC-2022-00112.

As a Master's student, as per Regulation 77 of the General Regulations for University Postgraduate Awards 2021, I accept that should my dissertation be awarded a Grade A, it will be made publicly available on the University of Malta Institutional Repository.

ABSTRACT

Author: Jessica Aquilina

Title: An Investigation into the Attraction and Rejection Factors to the Teaching Profession:
A Maltese Case Study

It is a well-researched fact (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2004; Dray et al., 2010) that many individuals do not regard teachers as professionals although they contribute a crucial service to the society. It is argued that this profession provides the most indispensable service than any other profession in society, as these individuals are catalysts for all the other professions (Nenty, HJ, Moyo, S. and Phuti, F. ,2015). Thus, teachers need to be equipped with prior knowledge, skills and positive attitudes to succeed in this career. A great deal of research highlighted by various researchers (Gomes & Palazzo, 2017; Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012) has concluded that there are several attractions to the teaching profession, nonetheless, pre-service teachers face different hardships during their journey, which may impact the way they look at this this career (Garza & Smith, 2015; Özdás, 2018).

This study will take into consideration the pay, working conditions, the state of the economy and employment in Malta alongside the length and level of initial teacher education to examine what factors attract and those which are a turning point for individuals who are pursuing this career. The aim of this research study is to explore and obtain a deeper insight into the local scenario of the Maltese situation, by investigating different factors as argued by the individuals interviewed backed up with local and international research. It also aims to explore how different experiences can incite their love for learning and teaching, without the pressure of the challenges faced especially when in training. Thus, the main research question for this study will be as follows: What are the attraction and rejection factors of the teaching profession. Different perspectives from Maltese pre-service teachers will be included in this research.

Keywords: *Attractions, teaching, pre-service teachers, challenges, local scenario, experiences*

Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my family for their love and support.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor Dr Michelle Attard Tonna D.L.I.S.(Melit.), B.Ed. (Hons) (Melit.), MACEMES, Ph.D. (Aberd.), for her unwavering support and direction that was provided whenever it was needed.

I would like to express my gratitude to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC) and the Directorate for Research for allowing me to conduct this study. Special thanks goes out to all of the participants who, despite their hectic schedules, gave their contribution to this study.

Finally, this dissertation would never have been finished without the love and encouragement of my family, for all their help and support through this journey. They truly deserve my greatest thanks for believing in me, for taking pride in my accomplishments and their unfailing encouragement.

Most importantly, thank you God, for all your blessings and for providing me with the strength and courage to persevere till the end.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	<i>iii</i>
<i>Dedication</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>Chapter 1: Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Importance and significance of the study	1
1.3 General overview of dissertation	4
<i>Chapter 2: Literature Review</i>	<i>5</i>
2.1 Introduction	5
2.2 Teaching as a profession	5
2.2.1 <i>Teacher characteristics</i>	7
2.3 Job attraction	8
2.3.1 <i>Teacher motivation</i>	9
2.3.2 <i>Intrinsic motivation</i>	9
2.3.3 <i>Extrinsic motivation</i>	10
2.3.4 <i>Altruistic motivations</i>	10
2.3.5 <i>Occupational stress in the lives of teachers</i>	11
2.3.6 <i>Reasons for stress among school teachers</i>	12
2.4 Initial teacher education	13
2.4.1 <i>Initial teacher education in Malta</i>	13
2.4.2 <i>Curriculum</i>	14
2.4.3 <i>The practicum</i>	15
2.4.4 <i>Mentoring</i>	15
2.5 Entry to the teaching profession in Malta	16
2.5.1 <i>Teachers' warrant</i>	17
2.6 The local teaching context	18

2.6.1 <i>National Curriculum Framework</i>	19
2.6.2 <i>Teacher code of ethics</i>	20
2.7 Men in education	21
2.8 Salary in the teaching profession	21
2.8.1 <i>Teacher’s salaries</i>	22
2.8.2 <i>Malta</i>	22
2.9 <i>Continuing professional development</i>	23
2.9.1 <i>The importance of having qualified and well-prepared teachers</i>	24
2.9.2 <i>Student achievement</i>	24
2.10 Conclusion	25
Chapter 3: Methodology	26
3.1 Introduction	26
3.2 Epistemological position	26
3.3 Ontological position	28
3.4 Research questions	28
3.5 Why qualitative research?	29
3.6 The participants	30
3.7 The data collection process	31
3.7.1 <i>Semi-structured interviews</i>	31
3.7.2 <i>The interview setting</i>	32
3.7.3 <i>Recording</i>	33
3.7.4 <i>Building a rapport with the participants</i>	34
3.7.5 <i>Starting and finishing the interview</i>	34
3.8 The interview questions	35
3.8.1 <i>Interviewing pre-service teachers</i>	35
3.9 Ethical considerations	35
3.10 Thematic analysis	37

3.11 Conclusion	38
Chapter 4: Presentation of Data and Findings	40
4.1 Introduction	40
4.2 Emergent themes	40
4.3 Initial teacher motivation	41
4.3.1 <i>Philosophy of teaching</i>	43
4.3.2 <i>Passions to teaching</i>	45
4.4 Initial teacher education programme	46
4.4.2 <i>Study units</i>	48
4.5 Satisfactions of the teaching profession	49
4.5.1 <i>Sense of purpose</i>	49
4.5.2 <i>Students' achievement</i>	50
4.6 Difficulties of the teaching profession	51
4.6.1 <i>Salary</i>	52
4.6.2 <i>Student behaviour and learning difficulties</i>	52
4.6.5 <i>Societal views of teachers</i>	54
4.8 Summary of the findings	56
Chapter 5: Discussion	58
5.1 Initial teacher motivation	58
5.1.1 <i>Influence of prior teachers and family members</i>	59
5.1.2 <i>Working with children and adolescents</i>	60
5.1.3 <i>Passion for teaching</i>	61
5.1.4 <i>Teacher skills</i>	61
5.1.5 <i>Student progress and rapport with students</i>	62
5.2 Difficulties of the teaching profession	63
5.2.1 <i>Classroom management</i>	64
5.2.2 <i>High workload</i>	65
5.2.3 <i>Salary</i>	66
5.2.4 <i>Limited career progression opportunities</i>	67

5.4.5 Lack of respect	68
5.3 Support for pre-service teachers.....	69
5.4 Conclusion.....	71
Chapter 6 – Conclusion	72
6.1 Highlights of the current study	72
6.2 Limitations and strengths	74
6.3 Recommendations	74
6.4 Concluding note	75
References	77
Appendices	83
Appendix 1: Information letter	83
Appendix 2: Consent form	85
Appendix 3: Permission letter	88
Appendix 4: Permission approval	89
Appendix 5: Interview questions	90
Appendix 6: Ethical approval	91

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This brief introductory chapter aims to place the present study “An investigation into the attraction and rejection factors to the teaching profession: A Maltese case study”, in the context of educational research. A brief summary of the subject of interest will be given, along with a list of research goals that are all connected to the theme of initial teacher motivation, in order to address the value and significance of this study. A broad outline of this dissertation will be presented in the chapter’s last part.

1.2 Importance and significance of the study

“Teaching is not a job. It’s a lifestyle. It permeates your whole life.”

Jill Biden

The premise behind this quotation was crucial to the undertaking of this study on the teaching career. A crucial turning point in each young person's life is choosing their career. The process of career selection and entering the workforce involves a combination of interconnected intrinsic and extrinsic factors that influence each other in different ways. Several authors have emphasised that people's professional career rely on their historical, social, political, economic, family, and other surroundings in addition to their personal traits (Sexton, 2007; Maskit & Firstater, 2016; Parkey et al., 2012). In accordance with the findings of Gomes and Palazzo (2017), the development of an individual's professional path is a collaborative process that takes place through their interactions with themselves, others, and their social surroundings. This process is influenced by various possibilities that may arise throughout their life. In the context of selecting a teaching profession, Valley (2006) presents two hypotheses regarding how this decision might unfold. The first implies that students may opt to pursue a teaching career deliberately or unconsciously throughout their higher secondary schooling or even earlier, due to the natural attractiveness that such a vocation provides for them. On the other hand, the second hypothesis made by Valley

(2006) relates to the student's inability to pursue any other career for which he truly has a vocation.

Every profession encompasses its unique sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, along with its own set of rewards and challenges. The term "job satisfaction" itself can be ambiguous, but upon closer examination, the researcher will uncover the inherent elements within teaching that bring about personal fulfilment. These are the very aspects that bring happiness and value to the teaching profession. There are multiple factors within the teaching profession that contribute to a deep sense of personal fulfilment among teachers. Lortie (1975) calls this type of satisfaction the 'psychic reward' for their job. For many teachers, a significant source of job satisfaction arises from witnessing the success and growth of their students. Additionally, being recognised and appreciated for their efforts also plays a vital role in their overall sense of fulfilment. For the majority of the teachers, a part of their job satisfaction is derived from the success of their students, but also when their work is fully acknowledged.

Apart from the intrinsic factors contributing to job satisfaction, there are also the extrinsic factors, for example, having good relationships with colleagues and other superiors. A comment made by Nias (1989:95) regarding these relationships was that:

"... they signal a broadening of teachers' focus of attention from classroom alone to classroom and school; they suggest the existence of alternative sources of professional satisfaction, derived from influencing and relation to adults as well as children."

Nonetheless other extrinsic motivations include security of job, policy document, administrative staff and others (Bamford et al., 2017). Moreover, as argued by Bezzina and Portelli (2005), these factors lie within the responsibility of the education system and hold significant importance in maintaining teachers' extrinsic motivation.

The perceived reputation of the teaching profession plays a significant role in both attracting and retaining teachers. According to a TALIS report conducted in 2018, teachers

were surveyed about their perception of the level of respect for the teaching profession in society. In Malta, only 15% of teachers expressed that they "agree" or "strongly agree" that their occupation is appreciated, which is lower than the average of 26% among OECD nations and economies who participated in the TALIS study. In Malta 18% report being satisfied with their salaries, which is lower than the OECD average (39%). Furthermore, stressful environments and situations may affect the practices and motivation of teachers to pursue this career (OECD,2019).

According to data from the European Commission (2019), there has been a notable shortage of teachers in Malta starting from the 2017/2018 academic year, and this issue continues to persist. The insufficient number of students completing teaching degree programs indicates a lack of interest among young people in pursuing careers in the teaching profession, further exacerbating the problem of teacher shortages in the Maltese educational system. Because of this, attracting individuals to the teaching profession and sustaining teachers may be challenging and there may soon be a scarcity of specialists in Malta. So, the issue is, what are the qualities that draw people to teaching careers and what are those that turn them away?

My motivation for doing this study derives from the realisation that it can be very difficult for teachers to maintain their commitment and fortitude over the course of their careers. During my teaching experience, I met different teachers , some of whom told me that the teaching career is the best career one can choose, the one providing the most satisfaction and motivation. Conversely, I have encountered teachers who have advised against pursuing this path, emphasising that the teaching profession can be quite demanding, disheartening, and unrewarding. I became very curious to learn more about the teaching career, its satisfactions, the opinions of pre-service teachers and also other professionals about this career and ultimately what literature had to teach me about this topic. The commitment and hope with which teachers enter their profession may erode with time leading to passivity, which may also affect their effectiveness in teaching students and helping them grow. What happens next seems to rely on a number of variables, some of which are also outside the teacher's control.

In view of this, the current study aimed to gain a clearer insight and explore the multidimensionality of the attractions and rejection factors of the teaching profession given that it is very dynamic – it “may grow or diminish...” (Dey, 2005). Building upon this foundation, my aim was to explore the reasons behind individuals choosing this career and uncover the underlying motives and motivations that drive their decision-making process. As motivation is an abstract construct it instigated several questions including:

1. What motivates individuals in choosing the teaching profession?
2. What are the challenging factors that influence the way this profession is perceived?
3. How are pre-service teachers supported through their course journey studies?

In this regard, this dissertation will make use of a qualitative methodological approach to explore these and other concerns. The perceptions and information gathered from eight University students who followed or are following a teaching course will be analysed through a case study approach. All this is intended to understand these factors outlined at a finer level, whilst also offering pertinent advice on how to address these dynamic events.

1.3 General overview of dissertation

This dissertation consists of six primary chapters, each serving a distinct purpose. Chapter One serves as an introduction, shedding light on the topic at hand and providing a compelling rationale for its exploration. In Chapter Two, a comprehensive review of the existing literature is presented, delving into the relevant scholastic reviews and research in the field. The research methodologies recommended in this dissertation, as well as the study design and data collection methods employed, are all described in depth in Chapter Three. The fourth chapter is dedicated to the presentation of the gathered data, providing a comprehensive overview of the findings. Complementing this, Chapter Five critically evaluates these findings in the context of the current literature, offering valuable insights and reflections. The dissertation's last chapter brings it to a close by summarising the major findings and offering pertinent suggestions for further study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to offer a comprehensive analysis of the literature that explores the complexity of the teaching profession. Ganong (1987) asserts that literature reviews are carried out in order to analyse and assess research findings from diverse studies, which then leads to a debate on the existing state of knowledge and, not less importantly, the next research endeavours. The first section of this chapter takes into account the teaching profession and its notions following a detailed account on what teachers should know and should be able to do. Then an analysis on the attractions of the teaching career and occupational burnouts will be discussed. It also explores the teacher professional learning and its different stages such as initial teacher education, induction and Continuing Professional Development. Apart from that, this chapter explores several crucial aspects that contribute to the overall quality of education such as the teacher code of ethics, the significance of fair compensation for teachers, and the undeniable importance of having highly qualified teachers in our schools.

2.2 Teaching as a profession

In the media, we often come across discussions highlighting the vital role of teachers in shaping education globally and even contributing to the competitive edge of Malta's economy. However, dedicated teachers who fully embrace this role often face conflicting perspectives regarding their professional status and the recognition they deserve. Extensive research (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2004; Dray et al., 2010) has consistently shown that despite their invaluable contribution to society, teachers often face a lack of recognition as professionals. This is a puzzling contradiction considering that the teaching profession plays a fundamental role, serving as a catalyst for the development and success of all other professions. Teachers, as professionals, are not an exemption to any other professionals because they serve humanity by enhancing the body of knowledge that are essential for the betterment of this world. Unfortunately, many teachers express their concern by their altered status within the community in comparison with other workers (Sexton, 2007).

Teaching is often seen as a profession because it requires specific knowledge, abilities and moral standards. Some of the most important ideas related to teaching include specialised knowledge, as teachers must possess both subject-specific expertise and pedagogical knowledge in order to instruct and evaluate students' learning successfully (Theoharis, 2019). Moreover, it entails ethical standards which in few words is the code of ethics that governs professional behaviour in the teaching profession. Teachers are expected to conduct themselves honourably, uphold student dignity, and safeguard confidentiality (National Education Association, 2014). Furthermore, professional development plays a pivotal role in the teaching profession, ensuring that teachers stay abreast of the most current scholarly research and advancements in their respective fields (Desimone, 2011). Throughout their careers, teachers are expected to engage in ongoing learning, ensuring their knowledge and skills remain relevant and effective in the ever-evolving educational landscape. Nonetheless, a certain amount of autonomy is granted to teachers in their work, enabling them to use their expertise to decide how to best promote student learning (Theoharis, 2019). Finally, since teachers strive to assist their pupils in realising their potential and achieving their goals, teaching is frequently seen as a service-oriented profession (Noddings, 2013).

Even though teaching is largely acknowledged as a profession, there is still disagreement over what exactly qualifies as a profession and how teaching stacks up against other occupations. Some contend that a lack of reputation, low income, and limited autonomy are reasons why teaching has not yet attained the prominence of other professions (Noddings, 2013). Nevertheless, numerous teachers persistently advocate for the teaching profession and work towards enhancing its reputation. Ultimately, teaching is a challenging and multifaceted occupation that demands considerable talent, passion, and unwavering commitment to student learning.

In today's world, the demand for highly educated and motivated teachers is more crucial than ever. The choices of degree programmes and the incentives for professional growth among aspiring teachers play a vital role in enhancing the overall efficacy of educational systems. According to Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus (2014), teachers' dedication to their professional performance is fundamentally influenced by the motivating

factors for their enrolment in a degree programme. Each teacher wholeheartedly commits their life to the noble profession of teaching, driven by personal motivations that are as individual and diverse as the very essence of their being. However, it isn't often the money or the three-month summer break. There are deeper motivations for becoming a teacher than that. While each person's motivations are undoubtedly unique, a common thread among teachers is their inherent desire to positively influence and impact the lives of others. This nation has a need for teachers, and someone may feel called to the profession in order to fill that need. Who decides to become a teacher? Each expert has a somewhat different response; because there are so many various experiences, communities, and schools, no two teaching careers are the same, but there are some similarities. According to a poll by the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) in the United States, three-quarters of teachers are driven by a desire to change the world, and 80% of teachers say they like working with children (National Education Association, 2014).

2.2.1 Teacher characteristics

Depending on the setting and subject matter being taught, a great teacher might possess a variety of qualities. However, there are a few characteristics that are frequently linked to good teaching such as being passionate about teaching and genuinely care about the success of the students, recognising that students may learn at various rates and in various ways, being patient and adjusting their teaching to cater for the diverse needs of the classroom. Moreover, they should be able to explain concepts and ideas in a way that is simple for their pupils to understand, so it is essential for them to communicate clearly and effectively, think outside the box and develop creative teaching methods to motivate and engage their students. In addition to that, an exceptional teacher possesses a deep understanding of pedagogy and effective instructional strategies. They demonstrate a strong command of the subject matter they teach, exhibit organisational skills, and effectively manage their time. Furthermore, they empathise with their students, comprehending their challenges and concerns, which cultivates stronger connections with their pupils and nurtures an environment that is both supportive and motivating. Finally, they should have a good sense of humour that can help lighten the mood of the classroom and make learning fun for all students while continuously striving to be lifelong learners to improve their teaching practice (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2018; Brackett et

al., 2010). Numerous studies and research in the field of education corroborate these traits. For instance, a 2018 research by the National Centre for Education Statistics (NCES) indicated that effective teachers have high subject-matter expertise, communication skills, pedagogical understanding, and the capacity to form bonds with their pupils. Another study that was published in the Journal of Educational Psychology indicated that teachers who had high emotional quotients were better at promoting a pleasant learning environment and student accomplishment (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2018).

2.3 Job attraction

In the past decade, there has been a renewed interest in gaining a deeper understanding of the motivations behind individuals choosing the teaching profession. This interest stems from the recognition that societal structures, such as social status, income, initial training for teachers, economic conditions, and various other factors, undergo changes over time. Consequently, the exploration of these motivations is periodically revisited every ten to fifteen years, as highlighted by research conducted by Jugović et al. (2012) and Swann et al. (2010). Thus, one can say that the teaching profession does not have a universal set of attractions for all countries, but varies according to the society that one lives in. Moreover, personal traits and experiences may influence the way one sees this career. Nonetheless, research shows that there are similar types of motivation for choosing the teaching profession (Galea, 2020; Clandinin et al., 2015; Watt et al., 2013). Some of these motivations include aspirations, desires and goals to achieve (Crețu, 2017). Despite all the factors that contribute to making this profession attractive, a full awareness of the attractiveness of the teaching profession can be formulated by providing a general definition that encapsulates its appeal: “attractiveness of the teaching profession is a set of characteristics of this profession that make it relatively attractive to skilled candidates with respect to other professions requiring the same level of qualification and that encourage competent teachers to stay in the profession” (OECD, 2005). Due to the inherent diversity of individuals, attraction and preferences can vary greatly under different circumstances, making it challenging to observe and quantify directly.

2.3.1 Teacher motivation

Plenty of research affirms the importance of keeping teachers motivated so they can keep the future leaders; the students, motivated and on track to strive for success. The motivating factors in choosing teaching as a career can vary from one individual to another. Sinclair (2008, p.5) described motivation as the driving force that influences the level of attraction, the ability to stay focused, and the capacity to maintain concentration, she argues that: 'what attracts individuals to teaching, how long they remain in their initial teacher education courses and subsequently the teaching profession, and the extent to which they engage with their courses and the teaching profession.' In literature, motivations are categorised into three; intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motives (OECD, 2005).

2.3.2 Intrinsic motivation

A person's internal drive or desire to engage in an activity or achieve a goal is referred to as intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation may be a strong factor in the teaching profession that propels teachers to thrive in their job and find both personal and professional fulfilment. It entails engaging in an activity driven by personal gratification, with the primary motivation originating from within oneself. You are intrinsically motivated when you do something which is good, feel accomplished and is personally challenging without expecting something in return. Some examples of intrinsic motivation in the teaching profession include the love of learning (Reeve & Jang, 2006), the desire to make a difference (Gu & Day, 2007), the sense of purpose (Martin et al., 2016), autonomy (Reeve & Jang, 2006) and mastery (Gu & Day, 2007; Reeve & Jang, 2006). Teachers who have a genuine passion for learning are willing to experiment with novel concepts and master new techniques. They are always looking for fresh information and techniques to enhance their pedagogy (Tang 2011; Richardson, 2014). Moreover, a supportive, interesting, and inclusive classroom atmosphere is something that teachers who have a strong sense of purpose in their profession are driven to create. They are devoted to assisting their pupils in achieving success in both their academic and personal lives (Martin et al., 2016). Finally, teachers who are driven by the desire for mastery are motivated to advance their practice and their pedagogical abilities. They are always open for constructive criticism and suggestions on how to be more effective in the classroom (Tang 2011; Richardson, 2014). In relation to cultivating interest, passion, and dedication in their work, teachers can experience

significant advantages through intrinsic motivation. By fostering and promoting intrinsic motivation among staff members, schools can contribute to the establishment of a supportive and enriching environment for both teachers and students. This approach plays a vital role in creating a positive educational experience for all stakeholders.

2.3.3 Extrinsic motivation

Extrinsic motivation is defined as motivation derived from rewards, praise, or punishment from the outside world. Various forms of extrinsic motivation exist within the teaching field, including pay raises, incentives, acknowledgments, and public recognition. While extrinsic motivation can influence behaviour, its effects on long-term engagement and job satisfaction may be limited (Bamford et al., 2017). In a nutshell, it refers to the working conditions that are necessary to uphold an external kind of incentive and are deemed reasonable inside the educational system (Bezzina & Portelli, 2005). For instance, nearly half of the teachers who responded to a study by the National Education Association said that income increases were the biggest motivator for them to perform better at work (National Education Association, 2014). Furthermore, studies indicate that opportunities for professional growth and advancement play a crucial role in motivating teachers (Gu & Day, 2007). Teachers may be motivated to improve their performance when faced with external pressures from parents, administrators, and other stakeholders. It is vital to keep in mind that extrinsic motivation may not always result in long-term engagement or contentment with the task, even if it may be a great tool for encouraging teachers to perform at their best. When incentives are perceived as unfair or inappropriate, extrinsic motivation may even have detrimental impacts on teachers' motivation, such as causing burnout or resentment. To foster a supportive and fulfilling work environment for teachers, it is crucial to strike a balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivators.

2.3.4 Altruistic motivations

Having altruistic motivations in teaching refers to the desire to assist others and have a positive impact on their lives. Instead of seeking out external benefits like notoriety or financial gain, altruistic teachers are driven by the internal fulfilment they have from

assisting their pupils in succeeding. Teachers frequently mention altruistic reasons as their top reason for choosing the profession. Given that they gain intrinsic rewards from their work, teachers who are driven by altruism are more prone to attain job satisfaction, engagement, and long-term commitment (Klassen & Chiu, 2011). A study carried out locally by Attard Tonna and Calleja (2021) shows that whilst generally teachers have intrinsic motives to join the teaching profession, in Malta the motives are driven mostly by altruistic motives (50% of the respondents). Some of the altruistic motives that attract individuals to the teaching profession include the development of interpersonal relationships, care for others, the desire to positively impact and change others, and the goal of boosting their self-esteem (Gu & Day, 2007). According to a survey conducted in 2002 by Australia's Ministerial Council of Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA, 2003), it was revealed that 31% of the respondents were drawn to the teaching profession due to their enjoyment of working with children.

2.3.5 Occupational stress in the lives of teachers

In today's rapidly changing world characterised by industrialisation and urbanisation, occupational stress has become an inevitable aspect of human life. This psychological state has an impact on an individual's productivity, efficacy, general well-being, and work quality (Bhriugu et al.,2021). Teaching is widely recognised as a high-risk profession, with a substantial number of teachers worldwide reporting high levels of burnout and emotional exhaustion (Cefai & Malouff, 2020). Many individuals nowadays are regarding the teaching profession as a high stress profession due to the nature of their job. Several studies suggest that the teaching profession is prone to high levels of stress, which can have adverse effects on career motivation, effectiveness, and job satisfaction among talented teachers (Bhriugu et al.,2021; Cefai & Malouff, 2020). In Malta, a significant proportion of teachers, approximately 28%, report experiencing high levels of work-related stress, which surpasses the average stress levels among teachers in the OECD countries (18%) (OECD, 2019).

In Malta, the primary sources of stress reported by teachers in their workplace are managing demanding requirements imposed by local, regional, and national authorities, coping with excessive lesson preparation, and dealing with a heavy workload of marking assessments (OECD, 2019). A survey conducted in 2018 by 'Teachers in Europe: Careers,

Development and Wellbeing' confirms that one of the major causes of stress for Maltese teachers is that of conforming with changes enacted by the authorities (Maltatoday, 2021). Approximately 64% of individuals in lower secondary schools in Malta reported experiencing some level of stress, with 29% indicating a high level of stress. Additionally, based on a stress index considering various factors such as mental and physical health, Maltese teachers rank as the fifth most stressed in Europe. However, it is important to underline that stress management may have a significant impact on a person's quality of life in general, as well as their employment, physical and mental health, and general well-being.

2.3.6 Reasons for stress among school teachers

Numerous studies (Azhan et al., 2016; Oteer, 2015) have consistently highlighted the presence of stress among teachers, arising from various circumstances. Factors such as lesson planning, classroom management, large class sizes, inadequate support, and other related challenges have been identified as contributors to teacher stress. Teachers may experience stress due to students' challenging behaviour, which can significantly impact their well-being and job satisfaction (Azhan et al., 2016). As teachers spend a considerable amount of time with their students, they are directly exposed to various attitudes and characteristics displayed by the students. Therefore, the students' poor behaviours can easily distract teachers and decrease their level of concentration especially when trying to reach learning outcomes (Azhan et al., 2016). Additionally, Malta is experiencing an influx of new students who are not fluent in either Maltese or English, presenting a significant challenge for teachers. According to data from the National Statistics Office, the number of non-Maltese students doubled between the academic years 2012/2013 and 2016/2017 (OECD, 2017).

When teachers are frequently overwhelmed with excessive workloads, it becomes an additional factor that can contribute to stress. Teachers today receive an excessive amount of administrative labour, and as a result, their responsibilities and tasks have grown, increasing the likelihood that they will commit professional errors (Azhan et al., 2016; Oteer, 2015). Administrative guidance can become a significant source of stress when the school's Senior Management Team (SMT) fails to provide equitable support to teachers and assigns

them tasks that are beyond their designated responsibilities (Otter, 2015; Azhan et al., 2016). Additionally, strained relationships between new and experienced teachers can contribute to increased stress levels, particularly when attempting to establish effective collaboration (Azhan et al., 2016).

2.4 Initial teacher education

When individuals decide to enter this profession, they have to apply for an Initial Teacher Education Programme. Initial teacher education (ITE) describes the procedure used to train people to become teachers. Typically, this entails a mix of in-class training in the real world and academic curriculum. In many countries, Initial Teacher Education (ITE) is a mandatory requirement for individuals aspiring to become certified teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2017). ITE encompasses various pathways, which can include a university degree programme, a postgraduate diploma, or a certificate, depending on the specific programme and country. During the coursework component of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), aspiring teachers typically engage in a variety of classes that encompass pedagogy, education theory, and subject-specific material. In addition to attending classes and engaging in theoretical and practical coursework, students pursuing Initial Teacher Education (ITE) may also be required to complete various assignments, research projects, and tests (Darling-Hammond, 2017). Supervised teaching internships in classrooms often make up the practical experience portion of the ITE curriculum. Pre-service teachers have the chance to learn from veteran teachers, engage with children, and gradually assume greater responsibility as they advance in their careers throughout these placements (Feiman-Nemser, 2001). In general, ITE plays a significant role in making sure that teachers are adequately prepared to enter the classroom and promote student learning. To ensure that ITE programmes are responsive to the shifting requirements of students and society, there is continual discussion regarding the best methods to structure them.

2.4.1 Initial teacher education in Malta

Since its inception in 1978, the Faculty of Education has been the main contributor of teacher education programmes in Malta. Canon Paolo Pullicino introduced the first local

teacher training system locally within the Old University Building at Valletta Campus (Zammit Mangion,1992, p.20).

In Malta, there exists a lack of comprehensive policy governing the national regulation of Initial Teacher Education. The University of Malta possesses full autonomy in determining the curriculum and content of courses that ultimately lead to the official certification of teachers (Bezzina & Caruana, 2019). Up to 2016, a recognised teacher training course consisted of a four-year concurrent B.Ed. (Hons) course for both primary and secondary school teachers, or a one-year consecutive Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course for secondary school teachers. In order to enhance the quality of teaching, there has been a recent development in initial teacher education where it has been extended from a bachelor's degree level to a master's level (European Commission, 2019).

In 2018, the Institute for Education began providing part-time programmes in primary education and selected areas of secondary education as part of their curriculum offerings. The aim is to improve individuals' qualifications and salary by becoming more qualified. Presently, there are many initial teacher education programmes which one can opt for in obtaining a master's level course. Rather than qualifying for a B.Ed. (Hons), one has to apply for a three-year undergraduate degree and two-year master's level post-graduate course, commonly known as the Master's in Teaching and Learning course (MTL). Whilst applying for an Initial Teacher Programme, student teachers need to also be in possession of both Maltese and English proficiency tests. Moreover, they need to present a clean police conduct certificate and are barred from applying to this programme if they are included in the Register established under the Protection of Minors Act. The acceptance of students into these programs depends on the availability of human resources and suitable classes for the field placement component. The selection process is based on the evaluation of the applicants' academic credentials and their demonstrated qualities (Bezzina & Caruana, 2019).

2.4.2 Curriculum

Initial teacher programmes involve the acquisition of all competences and skills required for the teaching profession. Competencies along the vocational abilities are

essential to a successful teacher (Kelemen, 2015). Malta's Faculty of Education Initial Teacher Programmes (ITE), include a balance between different components mainly educational sciences involving psychology, philosophy and sociology, methodology and the practicum. (Bezzina & Caruana, 2019). This programme introduces students to the knowledge of the educational context, with a primary focus on learners and pedagogies. It covers various themes in education, including current issues like disabilities, management, and parental involvement. Additionally, the course emphasises subject methodology to develop content knowledge and promote the creation of positive learning environments. The programme also includes a research component and a teaching experience (Buhagiar & Attard Tonna, 2015)

2.4.3 The practicum

The MTL programme emphasises on the importance of practice. The practicum is key, as no matter how effective theoretical knowledge is, it loses its efficiency without practice (Kelemen, 2015). Here, students are required to put what they learnt into practice. The students are placed from the beginning of the first scholastic year in a school in which they start observing practice, mainly pedagogical content knowledge in relation to general pedagogy. Moreover, they start to observe some themes which are salient in education. Many pre-service teachers argue that this is the most stressful period of the whole programme. In these few weeks, students determine whether they have what it takes to be a successful teacher or whether they should opt for another profession.

2.4.4 Mentoring

Another feature that was introduced in the MTL course as part of the initial education training is mentoring, whereby a mentor is allocated to each student from the first day of their field placement. Caruana argues that mentoring should become a “means [whereby] the faculty is involved systematically with teachers who are in employment” (Buhagiar & Attard Tonna, 2015, p. xii). The overall goal of Malta's ITE programme is to guarantee that teachers are adequately trained to satisfy the demands of both students and society. It is periodically assessed to make sure it stays adaptable to new demands and that graduates have the qualifications necessary to be successful teachers.

2.5 Entry to the teaching profession in Malta

In Malta, there are several ways to enter the teaching profession, depending on the individuals' qualifications and experiences. As previously mentioned, in order to become a certified teacher in Malta, it is necessary to successfully complete an official Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme. Alternatively, individuals with a degree in a related field, such as education, may be eligible to pursue a postgraduate diploma in education to fulfil the requirements. Another pathway involves obtaining a degree in a relevant field and completing an approved teacher training programme. Individuals with a degree in a relevant field may also meet the qualifications to enrol in an accredited teacher training programme. These programmes offer the necessary education and credentials to apply for teacher certification (European Commission, 2019). Finally, individuals who do not meet the requirements to become certified teachers can apply for a teaching assistant position at a school. These jobs could open up more options in the teaching field and can give individuals valuable experience (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012)

In the majority of countries, a minimum requirement for teaching is a bachelor's degree. However, in six countries, namely Czechia, Ireland, Latvia, Malta, Austria, and Slovakia, the minimum qualifications for teaching may be below ISCED 6. This includes qualifications like short-cycle tertiary education, post-secondary non-tertiary education, upper secondary education, and lower levels of education. In terms of qualifications and salary, there is a notable distinction between pre-primary education and higher education levels in certain countries. For instance, in Czechia and Slovakia, pre-primary teachers are typically required to have upper secondary qualifications, whereas primary and secondary teachers are expected to hold a master's degree. In Malta, pre-primary teachers are required to have qualifications at the post-secondary non-tertiary level, while teachers in primary and secondary education are required to possess a bachelor's degree. It is worth mentioning that the minimum qualifications and salary tend to be lower for pre-primary teachers compared to those in higher education levels (European Commission, 2022). Latvia and Slovenia stand out among the countries where all teachers, regardless of their qualification level upon entering the profession, receive the same minimum starting salary. In countries like Poland, a significant majority of teachers possess a master's degree and receive the same salary scale as upper secondary teachers. In Romania, the majority of

teachers hold at least a bachelor's degree qualification or higher, and they receive the same salary irrespective of the education level they teach. However, it is important to note that the minimum qualification requirements for pre-primary and primary teachers may be lower than those for teachers at higher education levels, as reported by the European Commission (2022).

It is significant to note that depending on the level of education you desire to teach at and the kind of school you wish to work in, the particular criteria for entering the teaching profession in Malta may change.

2.5.1 Teachers' warrant

The education sector outlined a number of procedures and requirements that individuals need to possess in order to practise the teaching profession. Individuals need to be in possession of a teacher's warrant which can be rewarded to the applicant after two years of teaching. Individuals are eligible for a teacher's warrant in Malta if they are Maltese citizens, EU citizens or are permitted to work in Malta under law. Moreover, they need to be of good conduct and have full legal capacity (Ministry for Education and Employment, n.d). Article 24 of the Education Act (p.14) argues that apart from the points mentioned, one must be in possession of a recognised degree, postgraduate certificate, any other professional qualification or any other qualification that entitles individuals to practise the teaching profession to be eligible to apply for a warrant. A temporary warrant should be presented in the first two years of teaching or if not in possession of the criteria mentioned. This has to be renewed every year. The Malta Ministry for Education and Employment is where you can submit an application for a warrant. A completed application form must be sent along with the required supporting materials, such as certified copies of your credentials, job history, and personal identification documents. In it, there should be at least two references from respectable organisations that verifies the individuals' qualifications. These references ought to be provided by people who have had professional contact with the individuals and can attest to their integrity, competence, and expertise. The Ministry for Education and Employment may also ask individuals for an interview after reviewing their application to determine their suitability for the position of teacher. Finally, if the

application is successful, individuals will be issued with a warrant to teach in Malta (Ministry of Education and Employment, n.d.)

2.6 The local teaching context

When individuals consider entering the teaching profession in Malta, it is crucial to recognise the various educational sectors that exist locally. Education in Malta is offered through three different sectors: the state, the church and the private sectors (Ministry for Education and Employment, 2012). State or public schools are state-funded institutions that offer free education to Maltese residents and citizens. The Ministry for Education and Employment oversees public schools in Malta, which provide primary, secondary, and postsecondary education. Church schools provide elementary and secondary education. Church schools may provide supplementary religious education and activities in addition to the public schools' standard curriculum. Private schools are supported by private people or groups. In addition to offering different curricula and teaching philosophies from public schools, private schools may also have tuition rates (Government of Malta, n.d). In total one can find 101 state schools, 55 church schools and 24 independent schools located in different villages around the island. Compulsory education is divided into a pre-primary level for children aged 3-5, a six-year primary cycle for ages 5-10 and five years of secondary education for ages 11-16. The aim of the compulsory education is to provide students with meaningful certification to pursue post-secondary education.

The Maltese teaching context is characterised by a number of unique features and challenges. One of the key aspects of the Maltese teaching context is bilingual education. Malta's official languages are Maltese and English. Maltese students are therefore instructed in both languages and are required to be fluent in both (Borg & Hughes, 2013). On another note, class sizes tend to host an average of 20-25 students per class. Additionally, there is a notable emphasis on Catholic Education in the country. Religion is a required subject in both primary and secondary education in Malta, where Catholic schools make up the majority of educational institutions. Catholic education is valued as a crucial component of Maltese identity and culture (Borg & Gatt, 2014).

Unfortunately, Malta suffers from a teacher shortage, particularly in fields like science, technology, engineering, and maths (STEM). This has made it more difficult to find and keep qualified teachers. But a fortunate aspect is that with a growth in the use of digital technology in teaching and learning, the Maltese educational system has seen considerable technical developments in recent years (The World Bank, 2019). Apart from that, the Maltese educational system puts a lot of focus on inclusive education and works to give students with disabilities or special needs the same chances as other students (Ministry of Education and Employment, n.d.). These are a few of the salient features of the Maltese educational environment. It is vital to remember that based on the particular school or institution, the educational system and teaching methods may vary and alter. Two essential resources that teachers frequently rely on for guidance are the National Curriculum Framework and the Teacher Code of Ethics. These documents serve as valuable references when teachers require support or direction in their professional practice. In the following sub-themes, we will delve deeper into the significance and implications of these documents for teachers in their everyday work.

2.6.1 National Curriculum Framework

The Ministry of Education and Employment (2012) published a document called "The National Curriculum Framework" with the aim of providing guidance to teachers and other stakeholders in the field of pedagogy. The creation of this framework aimed to foster consensus among various stakeholders in different schools. The ultimate goal was to support children in reaching their full potential and achieving academic success. The NCF (2012) aims to achieve various objectives such as encouraging children and teachers to work collaboratively together, provide quality time for social interaction and support school to fulfil children and parents' expectations among other. This framework is built upon six Key Learning Areas (KLAs) that form the foundation of the framework. These KLAs encompass languages, mathematics, science, technology, humanities and social studies, and personal, social, and career development. Learning Outcomes are further broken down into subsections for each Key Learning Area. These Learning Outcomes give students a clear explanation of what is expected of them at each level of their education in terms of what they should know and be able to do. The implementation of the National Curriculum Framework involves the utilisation of various teaching and learning techniques. Additionally,

the framework is evaluated through a range of assessment methods, including formative assessments that occur throughout the learning process and summative assessments that provide a final evaluation of student achievement. It emphasises the growth of crucial abilities including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and teamwork (Malta Union of Teachers, 2019). Additionally, it advocates for inclusive education with an emphasis on accommodating the various needs of all students (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012).

This document is important for teachers for several reasons. Firstly, the NCF outlines the learning objectives that students should attain at each level of their education. This information provides guidance for teaching and learning. Teachers will have precise instructions on what to teach and how to teach it as a result, ensuring that pupils receive a uniformly high-quality education (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). It also helps teachers to plan lessons and structure their teaching around the learning outcomes and skills that students need to develop. Moreover, it promotes collaboration and the sharing of best practices among teachers by offering a standard framework for teaching and learning. This may contribute to raising the standard of pedagogy throughout the whole educational system (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012). Apart from that, the NCF is created to promote the accomplishment of national educational objectives, such as raising educational equity and improving student outcomes. Teachers may assist to make sure that their pedagogy is in accordance with these objectives by adhering to the rules outlined in the NCF (Department for Education, 2013). Finally, it gives teachers a framework for reflecting on their own pedagogical practices and identifying areas for professional growth. Teachers may continuously advance their abilities and knowledge while staying current with the finest educational practices by using the NCF to direct their instruction (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, 2012).

2.6.2 Teacher code of ethics

The Teacher Code of Ethics in Malta is a collection of rules that spells out the required moral and ethical standards for teachers in the nation. The purpose of the code is to guarantee that teachers respect the standards of the teaching profession and conduct themselves in a professional and ethical way at all times. The Teacher Code of Ethics in

Malta was developed by the Professional Standards for Teachers Council, which is responsible for setting professional standards for teachers in the country (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). The code addresses a variety of subjects, such as professionalism and integrity, respect for students, respect for colleagues and the profession, fairness and impartiality, responsibility and accountability, confidentiality and privacy and professional development (Ministry of Education and Employment, 2012). In each of these categories, the code outlines what is expected of teachers and offers suggestions for how they should respect the standards of the profession in their daily work.

2.7 Men in education

Research conducted by Bezzina and Portelli (2005) indicates that the initial motivations to pursue a teaching profession are closely tied to extrinsic factors, particularly the alignment of the career with an individual's family obligations. The influence of family commitments is found to be more significant for women in society compared to men. Possibly due to the fact that in Maltese society, women are considered to be the primary caregivers to their children and men need to have well-paid jobs to sustain their families (Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2021). On average across OECD countries 70% of teachers are women (OECD, 2019). In addition, few males are drawn to this line of work because of gender prejudice, which frequently surfaces at a very young age when parents may base their expectations for their children's careers on gender stereotypes (OECD,2015). On the other hand, men are more attracted to the teaching profession in subjects such as Science, Maths and Technology as they are seen as more masculine (OECD,2017).

2.8 Salary in the teaching profession

Teaching is not commonly seen as a financially lucrative career choice for individuals seeking high salaries. A European study conducted in 2012 suggests that competitive salary levels, complemented by additional allowances, serve as significant incentives to maintain high motivation among teachers and enhance the attractiveness of the teaching profession (European Commission, 2020). Studies have concluded that low income does exert an impact on teacher's decision to leave this profession (OECD, 2019). The intricate and diverse range of competences demanded from teachers presents a challenge for education systems worldwide in terms of attracting highly qualified graduates to the teaching profession and

subsequently retaining them. In this regard, this report emphasises the crucial role of investing in teachers and trainers as a means to enhance the overall quality of education and training. It asserts that sufficient, effective, and sustainable investment in this area encompasses several key aspects. These include providing ample possibilities for initial teacher education programmes, ensuring the availability of suitable infrastructure and conducive learning spaces, equipping them with appropriate tools and resources, and addressing the importance of competitive salaries. Such comprehensive investments, as highlighted by the European Commission (2020), are instrumental in fostering an environment conducive to optimal educational outcomes.

2.8.1 Teacher's salaries

There is a considerable disparity in teacher salaries among European countries, with the range varying from EUR 4,000 to EUR 92,000 per year, depending on the specific country. In many countries, salary variations based on educational levels are associated with differences in the minimum qualification requirements. Typically, pre-primary teachers earn less compared to upper secondary teachers. Among EU member states, countries such as Bulgaria, Latvia, Hungary, Poland, and Romania have starting salaries for new teachers that fall below EUR 10,000 per year. Likewise, countries including Albania, North Macedonia, Serbia, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina have relatively low salary levels for teachers. On the other hand, Denmark, Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein offer the highest salaries for teachers, exceeding EUR 50,000. In the majority of countries, starting salaries for teachers increase as they teach at higher education levels. These variations in salary levels reflect the different economic conditions and priorities within each country (European Commission, 2020).

2.8.2 Malta

In Malta, the starting salary for teachers is EUR 22,603 per year, excluding allowances, which is slightly lower than the European average for primary school teachers, which stands at EUR 25,668. However, when compared to countries like Slovenia, Greece, and Croatia, teachers in Malta earn more. Malta falls into the modest category for early increases in teacher pay, along with countries like Finland and Lithuania. Education Minister

Evarist Bartolo acknowledged the efforts made to improve conditions for teachers, particularly in terms of salary, as the profession has become more challenging. Despite these improvements, many teachers still express dissatisfaction with their wages, which they feel do not adequately reflect their working conditions. A report conducted by the MUT (Malta Union of Teachers) highlights the changes and salary increases in 2022 compared to 2017, with an overall increase of 28.2% in salary scale 9, class allowance, and work resources. While there is still room for improvement, this data suggests that there is hope for further progress. Although there is a significant disparity in pay compared to countries like Luxembourg, it is worth noting that teachers in Malta are not among the lowest paid teachers in the European Union.

2.9 Continuing professional development

The satisfaction derived from working as a teacher is a significant factor that attracts individuals to this career. Attard Tonna and Calleja (2021) and Watt et al. (2013) argue that the motivation to become a teacher is influenced by the level of commitment teachers have towards their work and their willingness to invest in their professional development. Therefore, ongoing professional development plays a crucial role in retaining teachers and keeping them motivated in their profession.

Life at school can be incredibly demanding, with a myriad of responsibilities to manage. From addressing health and safety concerns to adapting to the growing need for online learning, catering to diverse learning needs, and addressing social issues, teachers have a multitude of tasks. Furthermore, ensuring the overall well-being and continuous learning and development of students is paramount. In light of the evolving knowledge landscape and the advancements in technology, coupled with the expectations of students and other stakeholders, the teaching profession requires a commitment to lifelong learning and acquiring new skills (European Commission, 2020). Presently, the Maltese educational scene has seen a rise in the number of teachers who resign from the profession. Teaching is not only an intellectually demanding career, but also an extremely emotional profession, in which issues such as motivation and self-esteem are very important (Bezzina & Camilleri, 2001). CPD comprises a wide array of means by which teachers ensure that their knowledge and skills are updated throughout their teaching profession. This ensures that teachers are

always in touch with what is happening in the classroom whilst preserving a positive teaching experience, staying up-to-date and also taking on new challenges which are presented in the daily life of the classroom (OECD, 2009). CPD helps teachers feel more at ease in offering different learning opportunities for all children to learn whilst also growing professionally. Moreover, it ensures that individuals are always on their toes, learning new things and developing as a professional.

2.9.1 The importance of having qualified and well-prepared teachers

All nations share the common goal of enhancing the quality of their educational institutions and meeting the increasing social and economic expectations placed upon them. Within this pursuit, teachers play a pivotal role as the most significant and valuable resource in schools. Recognising their importance, teachers are at the heart of school improvement initiatives and efforts to raise educational standards. The key to enhancing the effectiveness and fairness of education lies primarily in ensuring the attraction of capable individuals to the teaching profession, the provision of high-quality teaching and pedagogy, and the equitable access to excellent education for all students (OECD,2005). Research shows that the achievement gap between students with qualified and effective teachers and students with ineffective teachers widens each year. Evidence suggests that teacher quality is the number one influencer in students' achievement, but it is very difficult to measure (Hycock, 1998).

2.9.2 Student achievement

Student performance is influenced by a multitude of factors. One way to define teacher quality is by considering student achievement as an indicator of learning and establishing a connection between student learning and the effectiveness and success of the teacher (Berliner, 2005). A teacher who is well trained will be able to identify the strengths and weaknesses of his/her learner, therefore making learning and teaching simpler. Unanma et al. (2013) explored the relationship between teachers' academic qualifications and academic achievement of secondary school students in chemistry and discovered that there are positive relationships between the variables. Imam (2011) stated that highly skilled teachers adopt a two-step approach in their teaching. Firstly, they ask students to articulate and elucidate their existing understanding of the topic. Subsequently, they utilise

this knowledge to shape and guide the students' development of additional hypotheses and ideas. Competent and knowledgeable teachers exhibit self-assurance in their abilities. They perceive their classroom as a community of learners, foster positive relationships with their students, demonstrate expertise in their subject areas, and contribute to the field through leadership and service, as stated by Smith and Strahan (2004). Imam (2011) conducted research on the impact of effective and high-quality teaching on student outcomes. The study highlighted the significance of teacher quality and the influential role of teachers' leadership in determining the success of education. The qualities possessed by teachers have a profound impact on all stages of the teaching process. Therefore, in order to enhance educational results and outcomes, it is essential for all teachers to strive for high-quality education that benefits all students (Imam, 2011).

2.10 Conclusion

Regrettably, the current statistics regarding the number of individuals entering the teaching profession in relation to the demand for teachers in schools are discouraging (Grech, 2017). Specifically, the number of individuals enrolling in the initial teacher education course at the University of Malta has witnessed a significant decline of 20% within a span of two years (Academic years 2016 and 2018) (Parlament ta' Malta 2017, 2019 as cited by Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2021). These numbers raise numerous questions whether the initial teacher education and the teaching profession are attractive enough for students to pursue it. Will the imbalance between supply and demand cause more problems in the future and the need for new legislations to be applied will continue to rise? It's crucial to continuously work on enhancing one's teaching abilities and the traits if one wants to have a better teaching career and become a good teacher. This may be accomplished through taking advantage of chances for continuous professional growth, such as going to conferences, workshops, and courses, and by asking for feedback from co-workers and students. Maintaining a development mentality, being open to new concepts, and being willing to try new strategies in the classroom are also crucial. Teachers may establish a supportive and engaging learning environment that promotes achievement and personal growth by emphasising the needs of their students and concentrating on developing close connections with them. In the end, a dedication to continual learning and a love of teaching may result in a fruitful and satisfying career in education.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This study aims to delve into the factors that attract and deter individuals from pursuing a career in teaching in Malta. To achieve this, the chapter begins by providing an overview of the epistemological framework adopted to explore these factors. A comprehensive account of the chosen methodology is then presented, highlighting the reasons behind the selection of qualitative research as the most suitable approach for this study. Furthermore, key aspects of the research process are discussed, including participant selection and the acquisition of necessary permissions. Additionally, the chapter outlines the methods employed to analyse the data collected from interviews. Moreover, particular attention is given to ensuring ethical considerations throughout the research study, with relevant documents submitted to the Faculty Research Ethics (FREC) and included in the Appendices for reference.

3.2 Epistemological position

Epistemology refers to the field of study concerned with knowledge theory. According to Maynard (1994), epistemology serves as a means to identify and clarify suitable forms of knowledge. Moreover, it is argued that epistemology encompasses the process by which individuals come to understand what they know (Crotty, 1998). In the realm of philosophy, epistemology addresses inquiries regarding the origins of knowledge (Klein, 2005). Pritchard (2017) defines propositional knowledge as the focus of epistemology, encompassing assertions about the world or specific information without providing explanations. When conducting research, researchers must choose a specific epistemological approach. The interpretive and positivist epistemologies are in conflict with each other due to their association with different research methodologies. It is possible to define interpretive epistemology as the process by which a researcher comprehends the participants' subjective experiences (Scotland, 2012). Therefore, interviews and/or observations are typically used as a method of acquiring data. These techniques are not

intended to provide measurements like surveys. In contrast, proponents of positivist epistemology assert that scientific methods provide the most precise and ideal form of knowledge (Cohen, Manion & Marrison, 2007). This epistemological perspective argues that social phenomena can be studied by employing scientific techniques (O'Leary, 2004). In this branch of epistemology, the researcher is seen as the authority. Another epistemology is the constructivist paradigm. According to this perspective, it is believed that individuals actively construct their own knowledge. Moreover, it emphasises the notion that learning is a collaborative endeavour that involves the participation of all involved, rather than being solely an individual process (Prawat & Floden, 1994).

In my study, the interpretivism paradigm was adopted as I want to seek subjective knowledge where I will delve deeper into the participants' different experiences and opinions in the same context. As argued by Ryan (2018), interpretivism originated from principles developed by Kant and values subjectivity. This implies that the positivist approach challenges the notion of uniformity in nature, which assumes that phenomena will unfold consistently across various locations and time periods. In other words, this is the ideal epistemology for my study as it seeks to investigate people's experiences and opinions on the teaching career. The value of interpretivism as a valuable framework for exploring various aspects of our world cannot be overstated. When it comes to interpretative inquiry in education, this approach actively involves teachers as reflective practitioners, enabling them to foster a deeper understanding of their practice by consistently questioning and seeking answers (Taylor & Medina, 2013). By embracing this perspective, teachers can engage in meaningful reflection and generate valuable insights that contribute to their professional growth and the advancement of educational practices. Reflective teaching and learning techniques should result from these kinds of inquiries in all areas of education. It is important to highlight that this theory holds significant relevance in the field of education, as opposed to positivism, since it recognises that when dealing with individuals or groups, not everything can be reduced to numerical data and statistics. Moreover, interpretivist research often aims to understand diverse social constructs, enabling individuals to gain a deeper understanding of the specific subject or area under investigation. One of the notable strengths of this theory is its effectiveness in not seeking to overhaul or liberate a particular group or system. Instead, it provides an ideal starting point for new studies by focusing on

the fundamental objective of "simply" gaining understanding (Taylor & Medina, 2013). By adopting this approach, researchers can lay a solid foundation for further exploration and analysis, allowing for a full awareness of the subject matter before considering potential modifications or advancements. This theory's emphasis on comprehension paves the way for informed decision-making and the development of subsequent research endeavours. Through conducting interviews with participants selected for this research study, I will gain a deeper understanding of the factors that attract individuals to pursue a career in teaching, as well as the factors that deter them. This will enable me to establish connections between the responses of the participants and existing literature from researchers worldwide. Moreover, I will understand how and why things happen in this way as different opinions sought to be uncovered through the constructivism approach.

3.3 Ontological position

Grix (2010) draws attention to the strong connection between epistemology and ontology, underscoring that an ontological perspective necessitates a corresponding epistemological viewpoint, and vice versa. Ontological perspectives can be categorised as either realistic or non-realistic. Furthermore, Maxwell (2012) emphasises the importance of establishing clear ontological and epistemological assumptions in research, enabling researchers to gain a full awareness of the interrelationships among key research elements and facilitating clarity in discussions of theoretical approaches. Personally, I am inclined towards a realistic ontological viewpoint, as I firmly believe in the existence of an objective reality that is independent of individual subjectivity and conceptual frameworks.

3.4 Research questions

The primary goal of this research study is to examine closely the specific circumstances in Malta and acquire a full awareness of the local scenario. This will be accomplished by investigating a range of factors based on insights provided by the interviewed individuals, supplemented by relevant research conducted at both local and international levels. It also aims to explore how different experiences can incite their love for learning and teaching, without the pressure of the challenges faced especially when in training. The study poses the following research inquiries:

1. What motivates individuals in choosing the teaching profession?
2. What are the challenging factors that influence the way this profession is perceived?
3. How are pre-service teachers supported through their course journey studies?

I chose the qualitative research approach as I wanted to get a deeper insight on the experiences of students who are studying and preparing themselves to become teachers. Given that the study did not necessitate extensive participation from a large number of individuals, quantitative research methods were deemed unsuitable for this research study. I was not looking to generate any numerical data, thus the only approach that would enable me to learn about people's experiences in the field was the qualitative research method.

3.5 Why qualitative research?

According to Rossman and Rallis (2012), qualitative research is characterised by two key elements. Firstly, the researcher assumes a central role in the study, and secondly, the primary objective of employing a qualitative design is to gain insights into a specific domain within the societal context. It is argued that qualitative research investigates the viewpoints, first-hand encounters, and actions of individuals or a particular cohort. Moreover, this type of research is typically more comprehensive as it involves a limited number of participants or cases (Dawson, 2009).

Seale (1999) contends that utmost importance is placed on quality in this research. It is stated that quality encompasses the full awareness of the "what, how, when, where, and why" aspects of a subject. Thus, qualitative research centres on exploring the "meanings, concepts, definitions... and descriptions of things" (Lune & Borg, 2017, p.12).

The fact that qualitative research establishes some kind of relationship with the participants is the primary feature that distinguishes it from quantitative research. This is because, whether in interviews, focus groups, or observations, there is contact through interaction. Quantitative research, as noted by Coldwell and Herbst (2004), solely focuses on gathering numerical data through surveys and questionnaires. Due to its nature, this approach does not facilitate the establishment of connections between variables or phenomena.

3.6 The participants

In this research study, interviews were chosen as the preferred method of data collection. A selection of individuals who have undergone the MTL course was made. A varied group of eight participants was chosen according to their age, gender, background, and past experiences as this research requires candidates with diverse traits and perspectives. I used the stratified purposeful sampling method since I already knew some of the participants, and their backgrounds, thus, it was easy for me to decide who was ideal for the research study. Other participants were suggested by individuals who I had already interviewed. Due to ethical reasons, individuals who are following the same course as me were not included in this study. Individuals who are following another MTL course or who are in their second year of studies were encouraged to take part in this study. The participants chosen are listed in the table below. The codes next to the participants refer to the initials given by the researcher.

<u>Participant</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Gender</u>	<u>Nationality</u>	<u>Course</u>
Participant 1 (D) ¹	22	Male	Maltese	MTL in Early and Primary Years
Participant 2 (A)	35	Female	Maltese	MTL in Early and Primary Years
Participant 3 (G)	23	Female	Maltese	MTL in Early and Primary Years
Participant 4 (E)	22	Female	Maltese	MTL in Home Economics & Fashion and Textiles
Participant 5 (F)	23	Female	Maltese	MTL in Early and Primary Years
Participant 6 (H)	42	Male	Swiss	MTL in Early and Primary Years
Participant 7 (B)	23	Female	Maltese	MTL in Biology
Participant 8 (C)	26	Male	Maltese	MTL in Early and Primary Years

1

Table 1

This table shows the participants, their gender, age, and the course that they followed.

Not all pre-service students expressed willingness to take part in this research study. Unfortunately, there were three participants who did not respond, and two others who did

¹ Participants' names have been given a pseudonym so that the identities remain anonymous.

not provide a preferred date for an interview. However, I was able to find other enthusiastic participants who were eager to take part in the study. In a positive light, some of the participants not only offered their assistance but also recommended other potential participants for this study. Their willingness to help and support the research is truly appreciated.

3.7 The data collection process

This section provides an overview of the various data collection tools employed in the study, along with an explanation of the rationale behind their selection. Additionally, it highlights the reasons for choosing a specific data collection method over alternative approaches.

3.7.1 Semi-structured interviews

Robson (2002) asserts that semi-structured interviews are widely regarded as the most commonly employed interview format in studies conducted on a smaller scale. Alongside semi-structured interviews structured and unstructured interviews are also recognised as alternative approaches.

On the other hand, a structured interview is characterised by the researcher asking predetermined questions to the participant, leaving no room for deviation. In other words, there is no improvisation by the researcher during the interview process. Unfortunately, this lack of flexibility can result in a limited rapport between the participant and the researcher, as there is little opportunity for spontaneous discussion and exploration of topics (Silverman, 2006).

Semi-structured interviews possess several distinctive characteristics that set them apart from other interview types. In this approach, the researcher prepares a predetermined list of questions prior to the interview. However, during the interview, the researcher has the flexibility to modify the sequence and wording of the questions as deemed appropriate (Robson, 2002). Apart from that, during this type of interview, the researcher is free to ask questions that are not included which are related to what the

participant is saying at the moment (Bryman, 2012). Furthermore, these interviews provide data which is more reliable and can be compared (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). Qualitative researchers employ semi-structured interviews as a means to gather fresh data and explore participants' perspectives on a specific subject. Semi-structured interviews offer several advantages by incorporating elements from both structured and unstructured interviews. These interviews allow for the flexibility to pose additional queries, facilitating comprehensive exploration, while also producing reliable and standardised data. Moreover, in these interviews, the researcher can benefit from the advantage of avoiding distractions and maintaining focus on their specific area of interest, thanks to the pre-planned questions. Additionally, semi-structured interviews often utilise open-ended questions, which provide the researcher with the freedom to ask insightful and probing inquiries (Robson, 2002).

This led me to choose semi-structured interviews for my research study as it fit the criteria for my desired data collection. During the interview process, several crucial factors were taken into account. The following aspects are deemed to be of paramount importance for this specific investigation.

3.7.2 The interview setting

I chose to conduct the interviews with the participants using Zoom for several reasons. Firstly, it offered greater flexibility and efficiency. By setting a preferred date and time, participants were able to join the interview from the comfort of their own homes. Virtual interviews proved to be more convenient and eliminated the need for travel, traffic, and the stress of navigating to the interview location. Additionally, conducting the interviews on Zoom created a more comfortable atmosphere for the interviewees, as they were in a familiar environment. This helped them feel at ease and potentially contributed to more open and authentic responses. Out of the eight interviews conducted, three were slightly longer in duration compared to the others, typically lasting around thirty to forty-five minutes. Overall, the Zoom interviews provided an ideal setting for all participants, ensuring clear communication and a convenient interview experience.

While Zoom served as the initial choice for conducting these interviews via video conferencing, it is important to acknowledge that there are certain flaws in the platform that should be addressed. One of the most common limitations of this application is that sometimes the video and audio lag and outages which may disrupt some valuable and important data given in the interviews. In addition, it is important to consider the risk of potential audio loss when using Zoom, which could lead to the unfortunate loss of valuable data that cannot be retrieved if not recorded by alternative means. To mitigate this risk, I took precautionary measures before and during the interviews. I made sure to actively address any instances where I was unable to hear the participants clearly by kindly requesting them to repeat their responses. This ensured that no vital information was missed or overlooked due to audio issues. Furthermore, to provide an extra layer of protection for the interview data, I took the initiative to record the interviews using my mobile phone as a backup. This additional recording served as a safeguard, ensuring that there was another copy of the interview that could be accessed if needed. By implementing these measures, I aimed to prevent any potential loss of data and maintain the integrity of the interviews, assuring that valuable insights shared by the participants were preserved and available for analysis.

3.7.3 Recording

Capturing all participants' justifications and truthful opinions during interviews is of utmost importance. To achieve this, utilising an audio recorder proves to be the most effective method. It enables the comprehensive recording of every aspect, which is simply not possible when relying solely on note taking. In the consent form provided to the participants, I ensured clarity regarding my intention to record the interviews. On the day of the interview, I reiterated this point, emphasising that the conversation would be recorded on Zoom and that participants had the option to decline. It is common for participants to momentarily forget about the recording, and ethical considerations demand periodic reminders (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Throughout the interviews, I took care to remind participants of the recording and assured them that if they preferred to share their opinions without being recorded, they were free to do so. Respecting their preferences and comfort was a priority in maintaining a respectful and ethical interview environment. The audio recordings from the interviews were subsequently saved securely on my laptop. This

approach ensured that the valuable insights shared by the participants were accurately preserved, allowing for a thorough analysis and interpretation of their perspectives while maintaining their confidentiality. By adhering to ethical guidelines and facilitating open communication with participants regarding the recording process, I aimed to create a comfortable and transparent environment that fostered genuine and candid responses.

3.7.4 Building a rapport with the participants

Holstein & Gubrium (2003) argue that the level of trust between the participants and the researcher is a key factor in the effectiveness of qualitative research. This is supported by Cohen et al. (2007), who assert that it's crucial to keep a good rapport with the participants. I made an effort to establish and develop a rapport with the participants during the entire process of recruiting them. I emailed potential participants informally to gauge their interest in taking part in the research project before formally sending out information letters to them. Moreover, provided the participants my contact information in the information letters in case they required further information about the investigation. After obtaining signed consent forms, a mutually convenient date and time were arranged for the interviews to take place. This collaborative decision-making process established a connection between me and the participants, fostering a sense of mutual understanding and cooperation. Consequently, this helped the participants and I feel more at ease and comfortable with each other during the interviews.

3.7.5 Starting and finishing the interview

The commencement of an interview holds significant importance in shaping the overall trajectory and result of the dialogue. Recognising this, I paid special attention to the order in which I presented the interview questions. The initial questions were designed to be introductory and straightforward, aiming to create a sense of comfort and ease among the participants regarding the interview process. The questions included their age, course chosen and why the reason behind their career choice. As the interview progressed, I asked the participants questions about their views on the satisfactions and challenges of the teaching profession. The concluding questions centred around gathering the participants'

opinions regarding potential changes that could be made to attract more individuals to pursue a career in teaching.

3.8 The interview questions

Before drafting my interview questions, I took a look at similar papers and existing research literature. This gave me a clearer picture on what different researchers discovered and wrote about. Apart from that, I knew what I wanted to find out in my study, thus, I was able to create these questions based on what I was eager to discover. I was inspired to learn about the individuals' life and how they got to choose the teaching career. I wanted to discover what gives them hope and how the opportunities they were given in life helped shape their experiences. With this perception in mind, I was confident while drafting my research questions. Overall, the questions will give me a deeper insight on pre-service teachers' experiences and also their thoughts about the teaching career which will enable me to reach the research questions in my thesis.

3.8.1 Interviewing pre-service teachers

The research study placed great importance on capturing the personal opinions of pre-service teachers. To achieve this, the interview questions were specifically designed to revolve around their experiences throughout their studies and practicum, as well as their overall perspectives on the teaching profession. As per the request, the interviews were conducted in English. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight that in specific segments of the interviews, certain participants displayed a tendency to switch to the Maltese language. When encountering such situations, I will include English translations of the Maltese phrases when incorporating key excerpts in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5. Appendix 5 contains a copy of the interview questions for reference.

3.9 Ethical considerations

During the interview process, it entails delving into an individual's personal life, encouraging the sharing of personal experiences and opinions. Dawson (2009) emphasises the significance of treating interviewees with "honesty and respect" (Dawson, 2009, p.149). Additionally, Silverman (2006) argues that researchers must uphold ethical principles and

values, as failure to do so may reduce them to mere "technicians" solely focused on data collection and analysis (Silverman, 2006, p.315). Throughout the entirety of the data collection process, these important points will be diligently observed, ensuring that ethical considerations are firmly established and upheld. The utmost importance will be placed on maintaining a respectful and responsible approach towards the interviewees, acknowledging their personal experiences, and fostering an environment of trust and integrity.

In his work, Silverman (2012) highlights several crucial considerations that researchers must carefully address to uphold ethical standards in their studies. One such critical issue he emphasises is that of obtaining informed consent. Stated otherwise, the participant should have a full awareness of the study's purpose and scope while acknowledging the consequences of their involvement.

Before engaging with the potential participants, I had to complete the necessary steps to obtain ethical approval from the University of Malta. I submitted all the necessary forms, along with drafts of information letters (see appendix 1), consent forms (see appendix 2) and interview questions (see appendix 5) to the Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). The authorisation for my research was not granted immediately. I had to make adjustments to the form and arrange the interview questions accordingly. After submitting for the second time, I was informed that prior authorisation from the University of Malta, Faculty of Education was necessary to conduct interviews with pre-service teachers. Therefore, I contacted the respective person who could give me permission and a permission form was sent to me via email. A copy of this can be found in Appendix 3 and 4. After I submitted this, I got ethical clearance (see appendix 6).

In order to secure participants' informed consent, I dispatched an informational letter to the participants. The letter encompassed a portrayal of the research study, accompanied by an intricate depiction of the participants' anticipated involvement in the study. Consent to record the interviews was obtained from each participant. Furthermore, on the day of the interview, a gentle reminder was given to reiterate that the conversation would be recorded as previously discussed. Furthermore, I assured the participants that the

audio recordings would be permanently deleted upon completion of the study. Additionally, the interviewees were guaranteed anonymity as pseudonyms were intended to be employed.

Moreover, the participants were given informed consent and voluntary participation. Participants gave their permission voluntarily, without compulsion or undue pressure. They were told of their ability to withdraw from the programme at any time and for any reason, without fear of negative repercussions or harassment. (Crow et al., 2006). The participants were provided with the assurance that their identities would remain anonymous, and the information they shared would be treated with utmost confidentiality. To ensure this, pseudonyms were used instead of their real names, and personal details were not disclosed to any third parties involved, in accordance with the guidelines proposed by Giordano et al. (2007). Additionally, participants were given the freedom to decline discussing any topics that they deemed sensitive or uncomfortable, respecting their boundaries and preferences. This approach aimed to create a safe and respectful environment that prioritised the well-being and comfort of the participants throughout the research process.

3.10 Thematic analysis

After researchers have accumulated all the necessary data for their research study, a critical phase ensues, which involves the fundamental process in any research study known as data analysis. This process is described as being “intuitive”, “dynamic... and creative” (Taylor et al., 2016, p.169). This is due to the fact that qualitative researchers are in close contact with the data they have collected. There are numerous techniques for analysing qualitative data. These methods include (but are not limited to): Grounded Theory, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis and Thematic Analysis. The method which was chosen for this research study was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis, an underutilized qualitative analytical technique (Braun & Clarke, 2006), entails the researcher extracting themes directly from the data. As a result, Dawson (2009) defines this procedure as an inductive process.

The initial stage of the thematic analysis process entails transcribing the interviews. Transcription is the practice of “transforming spoken texts into written texts” (Braun &

Clarke, 2006, p.88). This was done by using the Microsoft Word Office document. Once all the interviews had been transcribed, I proceeded to print out the transcripts. Subsequently, I initiated the extraction of labels from the text written on the papers. Coding, the process of categorising data into meaningful groups, was performed by employing various highlighting techniques and making corresponding notes of relevant phrases and statements alongside the data. After I finished writing all the labels, I started combining those that I thought were similar to one another and organising them into themes. For example, the labels of 'achievement', 'acknowledgement' and 'improvement' came under the theme 'satisfaction in the teaching career'. A diagram of the thematic analysis process can be seen below ².



2

Figure 2

This figure shows the thematic analysis process.

3.11 Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented a comprehensive explanation of why qualitative research was chosen as the most effective approach for this study. An overview of the participants and the criteria utilised for their selection was provided. Furthermore, the process undertaken to establish a meaningful and productive interaction with the participants is described in detail. Ethical considerations are discussed, including the requirements for obtaining ethical clearance from FREC and the steps taken to ensure ethical conduct with the participants. Additionally, the data analysis method employed and the process of

² Thematic Analysis process diagram

analysing the collected data are thoroughly outlined. The chapter encompasses a detailed account of the entire data collection and analysis procedure for this investigation. In the subsequent chapter, the collected data is presented, and the results of the analysis are discussed.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Data and Findings

4.1 Introduction

This section of the dissertation presents the compelling results derived from an insightful single-case study conducted within the University of Malta setting involving eight pre-service Masters in Teaching and Learning students. The main aim of the study was to explore the difficulties and satisfactions of the teaching profession. This chapter aims to answer the following questions “What motivates individuals in choosing the teaching profession?” , “What are the challenging factors that influence the way this profession is perceived?” and “How are pre-service teachers supported through their course journey studies?” During this process I examined closely the underlying motivations that drive individuals to pursue a career in teaching. Additionally, I familiarised myself with the Initial Teacher Education programme provided by the University of Malta, designed to prepare pre-service teachers for their professional journey. The data analysis and interpretation presented in this section rely on the insights gathered from eight comprehensive one-to-one semi-structured interviews, carefully conducted to gain a deep understanding of the subject matter.

Through rigorous data analysis and interpretation, several key themes emerged from the interviews, shedding light on important insights. Along with incorporating my own interpretations, which led me to a set of conclusions that will be provided in the following chapter, I also plan to critically evaluate the study's findings in the context of the literature that was reviewed. The findings might ultimately be able to respond to the inquiry question raised by this dissertation i.e. An investigation into the attraction and rejection factors to the teaching profession: A Maltese case study.

4.2 Emergent themes

In order to uncover and extract patterns within the gathered data, the researcher applied the thematic analysis technique. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), researchers might identify unexpected results and viewpoints that might not have been taken into

account in the research study. This could provide fresh, intriguing study issues and lines of inquiry.

Data from the interviews was in abundance. After reading over the interview transcripts, appropriate words, phrases, and sentences were labelled. The participants' own language was used to analyse and summarise their accounts. Five themes, some which have corresponding subthemes (see Table 1) emerged from the interviews. These will be examined in more detail below.

Table 4.1: Emergent themes

	Emergent themes	Subsequent themes
1	Initial teacher motivation	1. Philosophy of education 2. Passions to teaching
2	Initial Teacher Education programme	1. Teaching practice 2. Study units
3	Satisfactions of the teaching profession	1. Sense of purpose 2. Student achievement
4	Difficulties of the teaching profession	1. Salary 2. Student behaviour and learning difficulties 3. Responsibility and pressure 4. Male teachers 5. Societal views of teachers
5	Measures to improve the educational system	

4.3 Initial teacher motivation

During the interviews, participants were asked to elaborate on their motivations for choosing a career in teaching. The analysis of this data, exploring the factors that influence individuals to pursue teaching, is described in the following section. This aspect is particularly significant as it aligns with one of the central questions of this dissertation, which revolves around understanding 'What motivates individuals in choosing the teaching

profession?" As previously indicated, the participants in this study were students enrolled in or completing a Masters in Teaching and Learning (MTL) programme at the University of Malta. Further details regarding the participants can be found in Chapter 3, Table 1.

Several respondents emphasised the importance of a combination of inner and external influences in their decision to pursue a teaching career. Upon being asked, participants were given the opportunity to share their perspectives on why they wanted to pursue a career in education, some of them mentioned how their early classroom experiences as students themselves had influenced their desire to enter the teaching profession. Participants A,B and E argued that it was always their dream to become teachers whilst on the other hand Participant D admitted that this career was chosen by default with the results obtained since he did not have what it takes to become a doctor or a lawyer. Thus, the teaching career was right about the best option to meet the requirements needed. Participants G and C say that their decision was heavily influenced by their family since many family members were and are teachers themselves, therefore, they expressed their desire for this continuity within the family, not necessarily having the motivation themselves to pursue this career initially but eventually fell in love with it. Three participants claim that they were enrolled in other careers and wanted a change, thus, considered the teaching profession since teaching was close to their heart and wanted a more fulfilling job where they could have a purpose. They said that:

A. "It was always my dream to become a teacher. I did not become a teacher sooner because I was not allowed to follow this career. Mostly by my parents who saw it as a dead-end job.... It was something that was always a dream and now, after all this years and a completely different career, I am finally where I want to be."

G. "I loved biochemistry, and so I went for physiotherapy... I did not feel passionate about it... so, I went for the teaching profession... I am very glad I did it."

C. "I always wanted to become an architect, but then I started to think on what I really wanted to do every day as a job. Teaching was very close at heart and through experiences with children, I realised that I really enjoy teaching children. It feels like I have a purpose."

Three of the eight participants mentioned their love and interest for working with children, and another participant said that this career helps her to form relationships and communicate with children, who are so innocent and intriguing at that age. Two participants B and E said that their love for the subject motivated them to pursue this career and wanted to inspire other children to love the subject as much as they do. Participants D, E, and F expressed their motivation to pursue a career in teaching as a means to find purpose in their lives, make a positive contribution to society, serve as role models for children, and support their growth, development, and overall well-being. In fact, these participants claimed that:

F. "I said that I can go for primary and try to join my two passions of teaching young kids and the teaching career."

E. "Since I was young, I had this thing in me to help others and school was close to my heart, so, the teaching career was always in my mind."

D. "I think that there needs to be care, mainly for young children, for their education and for their health and also how you can help them to learn and improve."

4.3.1 Philosophy of teaching

In an effort to obtain a deeper understanding of the initial motivations of teachers as well as teacher motivation throughout their career, participants were asked what their philosophy of teaching is. This is important since it allows the researcher to get to know the participants better and thus, can understand what motivates them on an individual level. This will ultimately help in giving suggestions on what can be done to better aid pre-service teachers and retain teachers. Given that every individual is different, and their experiences in schools were varied, each participant had something to elaborate on.

One of the participants claimed that it is important for her to view children as competent individuals. She argues that unfortunately some teachers see children as empty vessels who do not come with a lot of knowledge already. She said that:

A. "It is very important not only to pass on knowledge but see where students are starting from and build upon it and make it relevant to each student."

Similarly, some of them claimed that it is important for them to make sure that students move forward in their education through hands-on experiences and teach them the necessary skills such as being confident, humble, have a good self-esteem and self-worth, and have balance in everything they do. Many believe that education is not only about academics but also about teaching values, and being good human beings, thus, develop holistically.

Two participants D and E argue about the importance of parental involvement in schools. They believe that learning should transition from home to school and from school to home, therefore, having parents or guardians involved in their children's education is very important to make sure this transition is done. In fact, they commented that:

D. "... the parents know the children best... I think parental involvement is very important for teachers to make sure their children's needs are being met."

E. "Parental involvement is very important for me because students spend a lot of time at school... parents can support teachers and want to be part of their children's education... To have a smooth transition to what happens at home and what happens at school is very important to me."

Another Participant F, said that her philosophy of teaching is based on three pillars which are empowerment, communication and believing in themselves. The analysis uncovered a noteworthy finding: a substantial portion of the participants emphasised the necessity for teachers to prioritise placing children at the core of their pedagogy. They underscored the importance of providing hands-on experiences and adapting teaching practices to accommodate the diverse needs of students. Participant B argued that social justice should be a number one priority in the classroom where everyone is treated with dignity and respect regardless of who they are and where they come from.

B. "I also believe in quality and social justice, so I believe that whoever is in front of you, be it different races, different ethnicities, different social backgrounds, anything, even age... it should be equity and not equality... you balance everything out."

One of the participants, H, emphasises the crucial role of teachers in preparing children for life and nurturing their independent thinking. According to H, it is essential for teachers to provide children with the freedom to think, enabling them to develop into critical thinkers. H believes that this approach prevents them from merely following the crowd and lacking the ability to form their own ideas and make informed judgments. Similarly, Participant C emphasises the importance of providing children with a secure and supportive environment in which they are encouraged to take risks and learn from their mistakes.

H. "... the aspect of freedom, we need to create schools where the child has the freedom to express his or her thoughts in a way which sometimes doesn't have to be corrected... we can prepare children to have a say in life ... such as having the freedom of thinking.

4.3.2 Passions to teaching

Participants were prompted to articulate the passions they bring to teaching. This inquiry holds great significance within the study, as it establishes a connection between the qualities often associated with effective teaching and the characteristics that these individuals perceive themselves to possess. As argued in Chapter 2, depending on the setting and subject matter being taught, a great teacher might possess a variety of qualities. In this section, we will delve into the qualities exhibited by the participants that contribute to their effectiveness as teachers and enable them to navigate the demands of this profession successfully.

All of the participants mentioned the love for being and working with children. Some of these children might have social issues, some might not know what love is and thus, the participants argue that it is very important to make sure that these children feel safe, loved, and cared for in the classroom. A participant argued that a teacher can either break or make the child, thus, teachers should look out for all children and never give up on them.

Similarly, a participant added that one of her greatest passions is reading and learning new things. She believes that teachers should be resourceful, knowledgeable, and always updated to ensure that all children receive high quality education. If an teacher does

not have this ideology and this lifestyle, the love for learning, s/he can never strive to be a better teacher, and this will affect the students' performance overall. She commented that :

A. "It's the love of learning... learning can be accessible to everyone... I really enjoy finding different ways of helping people learn and try to make it fun.

Some participants said that their personality, their likes and what they enjoy doing are closely related to what they strive to have in the classroom. For instance, a participant affirms that she likes to incorporate a lot of outdoor activities since she believes that the outdoor environment is the children's third teacher. She also added that this reflects her character as she is an outdoor person, she enjoys being outdoors and it makes her feel happy. Likewise, another participant said that he is part of a community which helped him become who he is now. He expresses his dedication to fostering a sense of community within the classroom, where every individual feels valued, encouraged to reach their full potential, and embraced as part of a collective entity.

4.4 Initial teacher education programme

This dissertation aims to answer, "How are pre-service teachers supported through their course journey studies?" In the interviews, several questions were asked to get acquainted with the participants' thoughts on the Initial Teacher Education programme which is currently being offered by the University of Malta. It is important to mention that all participants were enrolled in a Masters in Teaching and Learning Programme either in Primary years or in a specialised subject such as Biology, Home Economics, Textile Studies etc.

When asked to provide further details about the course, all participants mentioned the inclusion of teaching practice and various study units. It was noted that some study units were designed to be universally applicable to all students, regardless of their specific field of study. These study units encompass a range of important topics within education. They include subjects such as philosophy, sociology, psychology, and inclusion in education. Additionally, the themes covered in the course address significant aspects such as working with students with high incidence disorders and promoting parental involvement.

Moreover, the participants mentioned that they also had their specialised subject lessons such as teaching Maltese in the primary classroom for primary years pre-service teachers. This varies according to what the participants were going to teach.

4.4.1 Teaching practice

A substantial number of participants highlighted the importance of the teaching practice in this course. All of them argue that this is the most important element of the whole course since they get acquainted with the job first-hand and see if they have what it takes to succeed as teachers or whether they should choose another career. Additionally, these opportunities provide them the ability to engage with other students, collaborate with knowledgeable teachers, and gradually take on more responsibility as they develop their skills. Some participants said that:

A. "The teaching practice is definitely a bonus. It gives you face to face interactions; you start seeing problems that you wouldn't have imagined before... you get the skills by actually practising the skills."

F. "The teaching practice actually provided me with the actual expertise on how to do the lesson plans, the scheme of work, how to negotiate with other teachers, how to handle situations in the classroom such abuse and stuff like that."

During the interviews, another crucial aspect that emerged was the unfortunate level of stress experienced by many individuals during their practicum. Pre-service teachers admitted feeling unprepared and lacking sufficient knowledge to handle the challenges they faced during those weeks. This was primarily attributed to the absence of any assistance or support available to them. Moreover, they were not prepared to teach certain academics and face difficult situations such as children with social issues. A participant raised a compelling point about their experience of seeking help from their superiors, only to find that even the more experienced individuals were unable to provide answers or guidance. Fortunately, the participant credited their friends for providing the crucial support that prevented him from failing. He mentioned that:

D. "We had the teaching practice; help is provided but not that much... I felt lost... I think we needed more help... You need to learn how to plan the lessons, how you're going to handle the challenging child, and how to work with LSEs and other

teachers. At University we don't really learn about these things. Maybe we learn about them, but not in detail, very briefly."

Likewise, a participant from the primary years sector expressed a concern that they lacked sufficient knowledge to effectively teach older children. They noted that their lectures and training had primarily focused on teaching the early years, leaving them feeling less equipped to handle the specific challenges and requirements of the upper years. She said that:

G. "In one of my teaching practices, I was with the year 5s and I did not really know what resources I could use."

4.4.2 Study units

In the interviews, participants claimed that during their course journey studies they were introduced to two key areas of knowledge: educational context and subject methodology. There were some participants who although they believe this course is very student-oriented, they still were unsure whether these study units prepare students to be effective teachers. In fact, a participant argued that she had a lot of exposure to different scenarios teachers might meet and these were tackled through a lot of discussions with professionals in the field. On the other hand, the same participant said that the course focuses a lot on theory and less on the actual everyday life experiences that teachers might meet on day-to-day basis.

Similarly, another participant expressed that she wanted to learn more on the different learning difficulties such as dyslexia and how to aid these children in the most effective way. Moreover, she argued that the study units focus more on the sociological and philosophical aspect of education which are important but take time from other important elements such as learning about different pedagogical styles for instance the CPA approach which was never tackled during the course. Participant C claimed that the course lacked subject content and individuals had to make their own research and use the trial-and-error method in the classroom which is not ideal when you are being examined during the practicum.

On another note, a participant said that this course helped him to become a more critical thinker and have the confidence to communicate to an audience, which is what the teaching profession is about. Through discussions and presentations, he was able to gain these skills and improve himself.

4.5 Satisfactions of the teaching profession

Given the objective of this research, it was thought necessary to investigate the positive aspects of the teaching profession that offer participants happiness, since these characteristics have a substantial impact on their motivation throughout their whole teaching journey. Chapter 2 highlights that the existing literature reveals a strong correlation between inner teacher drive and various factors, including pedagogy, teachers' conduct, and elements related to the content at hand. The findings demonstrate that intrinsic factors serve as a catalyst for the motivation of certain participants. According to the literature, experiencing a sense of satisfaction has the potential to enhance teacher motivation throughout their teaching career. The investigation generated a considerable number of replies, with several pre-service teachers reporting that the central factors of satisfaction were feeling purposeful, serving as good role models, having good relations, and helping student achieve. As we already outlined in the initial teacher motivation, it seems that the same motivations that fuelled participants to enter this profession are the same motivations that retain them.

4.5.1 Sense of purpose

In the context of the initial investigation into teacher motivation, the researcher noted that certain participants expressed a strong desire to pursue a profession where they could find a sense of purpose, make a meaningful impact, and feel genuinely needed. When queried about the aspects of their career that brought them satisfaction, several participants prominently emphasised the profound sense of purpose it provided. One participant, in particular, articulated that, given the commitment to their profession until retirement, it was imperative for them to ensure that their career remained both meaningful and fulfilling. In fact, this participant passionately argued:

C. "Satisfaction definitely for me is the sense of purpose, you know, making a difference. Even when considering that I want to do this every day until I am a pensioner, this is important you know the sense of purpose, this is important."

Furthermore, another participant shared her aspiration to make a meaningful difference. Reflecting on her own youth, she fondly recalled a teacher who helped her discover her hidden talent for singing. Inspired by that experience, she expressed her desire to guide and nurture the talents of her students, just as she had been guided. Additionally, she expressed her commitment to being a positive role model and providing unwavering support to children in all aspects of their education.

Similarly, another participant argued that teaching is a profoundly compassionate profession, emphasising the importance of viewing oneself as an individual capable of profoundly influencing the lives of students. This perception, they asserted, is especially vital during those critical formative months, as it can have a lasting impact on a child's entire life. Notably, this positive influence not only extends to the student but also resonates deeply within the teacher, fostering a heightened sense of motivation and enthusiasm for their work. One participant aptly encapsulated this sentiment, stating:

H. "... as an teacher you can have such a lasting influence, a positive influence on a person's life that would be a great satisfaction I would say."

Numerous participants articulated their profound influence on the lives and growth of children. They not only acknowledge the importance of fostering and positively shaping these young lives but also recognise the vital role they play in building the children's confidence and imparting essential values and character traits.

4.5.2 Students' achievement

Considering the research results, it is noteworthy that all participants highlighted student achievement as a primary, and quite possibly the most significant, source of satisfaction within the teaching profession. A participant admitted that although she contemplated several times to change her career, she would not imagine herself doing a different one. Students' accomplishments serve as a pivotal gauge of teachers' drive since witnessing students prosper and thrive is their greatest professional satisfaction. This being

the case, we can conclude that the participants base their satisfactions on the students themselves, thus, having good relationships with them is very important to understand how they can help them achieve. As already mentioned earlier in the chapter, numerous participants stated that having good relationships with their students is very rewarding.

Several participants claim that although the teaching career entails a lot of ongoing work, and pressure from different stakeholders, students make it all worthwhile when they learn new things, develop their own skills, and are motivated to discover. Indeed, there were instances where participants admitted to experiencing moments of discouragement during their teaching practice. However, witnessing the remarkable progress and genuine joy exhibited by the children served as a powerful catalyst, rekindling their own motivation to persist and persevere. A participant said that:

B. "...students being so motivated and happy to learn... and when they actually ask a lot of questions and seem interested to learn."

One participant claimed that one of the reasons she wanted to become a teacher is because of this 'aha' moment as she calls it. This is the moment when the child feels good about himself or understands something he did not know before because of the teacher's doing. She states that:

EC. "...it's that moment when you look at a child and you see that they finally understood it and they believe in themselves, that makes it all worth it."

On another note, another participant added that apart from the satisfaction derived from seeing students achieve, one of the greatest satisfactions is being recognised and receiving positive feedback from parents, thanking them for being present and helping their children thrive.

4.6 Difficulties of the teaching profession

In this section, I will try to address another primary question posed in this dissertation, "What are the challenging factors that influence the way this profession is perceived?" The literature revealed that difficulties in the teaching profession may hinder

initial teacher motivation to enter this career as well as affect their motivation throughout their teaching journey. There were numerous difficulties that were outlined in the interviews, the main and most common concerns that emerged were the salary, student behaviour and learning difficulties, responsibility and pressure, male teachers in the educational sector as well as teachers not being valued. I will discuss these in more detail in the coming subthemes.

4.6.1 Salary

According to one of the participants, not everyone views teaching as a very desirable vocation, particularly those looking for a high salary. Each and every participant conveyed their dissatisfaction regarding their salary, asserting that neither the remuneration nor the level of responsibility involved adequately reflects their worth. Participant A admitted that although she is did not chose this profession for the money, it might not be possible for others to follow this career, even if they want to, since it requires a lot of work, and the pay does not allow one to live comfortably in the society we are living in:

A. "The salary, I'm sure puts a lot of people off....In today's economy, if the pay remains the same, I believe that we're going to see a further decrease in the amount of teachers... I don't imagine a single parent with two children doing this job and living comfortably."

Additionally, another participant claimed that the salary might have a detrimental effect on her motivation to teach later on in her life and might change career overtime. Apart from that, one participant said that the low income lowers the profession's standing in society, thus, for this reason, the teaching profession has not been given the prestige it deserves.

C. "Many perceive teaching or education as babysitting, but it is more than that... pay should be better."

4.6.2 Student behaviour and learning difficulties

A significant number of participants claimed that one of the difficulties of this career is the presence of diverse learning difficulties and the need to effectively manage student

behaviour. One participant emphasised that the teaching profession entails dealing with many students every day. Every student is different, and the teacher has to make sure to meet all the various students' needs in all lessons so that the children can reach their goals. This in itself can be very difficult to implement especially when having very varied learning difficulties in the classroom. Additionally, a participant pleaded that not only are teachers met with different cases every year, but they have to make sure to deliver the curriculum which is described as being too compact for students with learning needs. Another participant adds that these issues are part of the teaching profession and unless one finds a way to embrace it, they won't cope in this profession.

G. "It is difficult, but it is part of the process which can never go away."

Similarly, a participant confessed that she worries about student behaviour since she is teaching students in their most delicate years. The participant acknowledges the potential occurrence of bullying, lack of respect towards the teacher, and a sense of entitlement among some students. This might create additional stress in the teachers' lives and diminish their motivation and performance. She comments that:

B. "Nowadays children don't really care that there is someone and you sort of need to respect them. That's why I emphasised on respect at the beginning because children do not care anymore... if there is a student who does not cooperate, then he or she may disrupt the whole class and that worries me... because I wouldn't be able to progress in my teaching and teach the class."

4.6.3 Responsibility and pressure

In the interviews, many participants admitted that the teaching profession entails a lot of responsibility and pressure from many individuals. A participant argues that throughout the year, teachers have to build strong relationships with colleagues, students and parents and make sure to maintain a strong bond, especially with their students which is not easy at times. Another participant said that teachers are responsible for many things at once. They have to plan lessons accordingly and make sure to meet the children's needs whilst creating a positive classroom climate and at the same time, they are responsible for

the wellbeing of approximately twenty students. This can be very overwhelming at times, especially on days where children are not cooperating.

Apart from that, some participants claim that the pressure from the SMT is too much to handle at times since they expect too much and little help is given. A participant added that the pressure from the parents can be overwhelming since they expect teachers to be available at all times if they are needed. Moreover, when something goes wrong, they immediately blame teachers for anything that happens. A participant admits that during her teaching experiences, she used to go and cry every day after school due to how much she was expected to do in so little time.

F. "We have a lot of stress upon us... such as parents sending me messages on teams at 11pm."

H. "There is a lot of pressure from many sides... from the family, from the society, from the school, pressure to achieve..."

4.6.4 Male teachers

During the interview, a participant mentioned a very important and valid point, which in my opinion is not given enough credit. He mentioned that the teaching profession is far more difficult for male teachers than female teachers. He mentioned that his first degree specialised in early childhood education and during his placement, his classroom teacher encouraged him to continue his masters since there are no male teachers in the early childhood education section. He argued that unfortunately, society still views this profession as a female job and men might be judged for choosing the profession. He said that there is this idea that men teachers cannot care and have good relationships with children as much as female teachers can:

D. "I was kind of offended, there is nothing wrong with being a male teacher in a kindergarten classroom... I don't think this profession is for females only, what a female can give, even a male teacher can give the same things."

4.6.5 Societal views of teachers

A considerable portion of participants emphasised that individuals who fail to grasp the complexity of the teaching profession often overlook teachers as professionals. This

misunderstanding stems from the common misconception that teaching solely entails shorter workdays, abundant holidays, and ample leisure time. A participant stated that teachers, contrary to other professionals, have to face excessive workloads and expectations from different individuals which is way more than a human being can handle. A participant claimed that society underappreciates teachers due to the fact that they don't know what it entails to be one.

F. "We are not appreciated, and most people don't know what goes in the job... It's not only a six-hour day work, we come home, we correct, we plan. It's a 24/7-day job."

Participant B argues that before the teaching profession was considered to be a very respectable one, people looked up to teachers as role models. However, as a result of society's lack of appreciation today, it is understandable why certain teachers feel redundant and change careers.

4.7 Measures to improve the educational system

When queried about potential improvements they would make to the educational system if granted the authority, teachers expressed diverse viewpoints, yet several common themes emerged. Half of the participants said that teachers should be given more help and free counselling services to cope and prevent burnouts. A participant stated that nowadays the classroom has become so diverse that it is important to have someone to vent to and give you suggestions on how to cope.

B. "... when you're dealing with difficult classes at least you know that there is somewhere to turn."

Similarly, another participant stated that there should be more cooperation between the SMT and teachers as well as teachers themselves to support each other, share resources and aid when needed. She suggested that there should be more training and opportunities for staff to interact and learn more on how to work effectively together.

One aspect highlighted unanimously by all participants is the need for fair compensation that accurately reflects the level of work involved in the teaching profession. This not only serves as an incentive for individuals to pursue a career in education but also addresses the issue of a shortage of qualified teachers. By ensuring teachers are adequately remunerated, we can enhance the educational system by attracting highly qualified individuals who are well-prepared to excel in their roles.

Moreover, numerous participants agree that the profession needs to be positively promoted. A participant argued that unfortunately teachers are not always positively promoted, and thus, this can discourage someone who wants to pursue this career. Apart from that, another participant said that male teachers should be seen and treated with respect. People need to become more open minded to the idea of having male teachers in classrooms as they are as caring and capable as women teachers . Thus, promoting male teachers in the classroom can encourage more men to pursue this profession.

D. "...change in mentality of seeing a male teacher in the classroom....there are still people that do not like a male teacher in the primary education and that may be a drawback for the male students and would like to be a teacher."

Finally, a participant argued that the structure of the course offered for teachers should be improved. There should be more part time courses available for those who wish to continue studying but cannot afford to pursue it full-time. Apart from that the university should work hand in hand with schools to make sure that after completing the course, teachers can really put what they learnt into practice and not have unrealistic scenarios and then become disheartened when entering the classroom.

C. "...having part time courses and more options."

4.8 Summary of the findings

With respect to the research inquiries: *'What motivates individuals in choosing the teaching profession?'* , *'What are the challenging factors that influence the ways this profession is perceived?'* and *'How are pre-service teachers supported through their course journey studies?'* data from the analysis demonstrates that the participants' love for

learning, their early classroom experiences, influences by their family, wanting a fulfilling job as well as working with young children were some of the reasons for pursuing the teaching profession. The participants claimed that there are several satisfactions of the profession including student achievement and being good role models for children. They argue that these satisfactions are what makes it all worthwhile.

The data obtained from the analysis further unveiled that this profession is very challenging and comes with a lot of difficulties such as the salary not reflecting the profession, student behaviour and learning difficulties, the amount of responsibility and pressure it entails as well as the societal view of teachers. This can have an adverse effect on the teachers' motivation to stay in this profession. Moreover, the participants expressed how their initial teacher education programme can be improved to not only aid current pre-service teachers but also encourage other individuals to pursue this career. In general, the participants expressed their determination to remain in the teaching profession, even in the face of classroom challenges. They expressed a collective aspiration to serve as advocates for pre-service teachers, aiming to facilitate their success in achieving what they themselves may have found challenging.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The analysis produced a wide array of findings, generating a significant amount of data that aims to address the following research inquiries: “*What motivates individuals in choosing the teaching profession?*”, “*What are the challenging factors that influence the way this profession is perceived?*” and “*How are pre-service teachers supported through their course journey studies?*” This chapter primarily centres on the sub-themes that emerged from the findings, subsequently classified into three overarching themes: Initial teacher motivation, difficulties of the teaching profession and support for pre-service teachers. These themes are further categorised into sub-themes as illustrated in the table below (see Table 1):

Table 5.1: *Emergent Themes*

1	Initial teacher motivation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Influence of past teachers and family members 2. Working with children and adolescents 3. Teacher skills 4. Student progress and relationship with pupils 5. Passion to teaching
2	Difficulties of the teaching profession	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Classroom management 2. High workload 3. Salary 4. Limited career progression opportunities 5. Lack of respect
3	Support for pre-service teachers	

5.1 Initial teacher motivation

The comprehensive findings to address the initial research question: “*What motivates individuals in choosing the teaching profession?*” demonstrate that initial teacher motivation is driven mostly by intrinsic factors. Intrinsic motivations encompass a range of constituents, including a passion for learning and teaching a specific subject, inspiration derived from family members and exemplary teachers, and the fulfilment of working with young children and youths.

5.1.1 Influence of past teachers and family members

Personally, this sub-theme is essential to me as my decision to pursue the teaching profession was heavily influenced by my parents' opinion and experience from previous teachers I had during my childhood and adolescence years. Thus, I can relate and contribute more to what I found in the analysis of data.

The findings from Participants G and C reveal that their motivation to pursue careers in teaching stemmed from the influence of their parents, who were teachers themselves, as well as the inspiration provided by their past teachers during their school years. The results showed that although they had the chance to be autonomous and choose their own careers, they recalled how through these individuals, they had the opportunity to see the passion for this profession, what it is about and also get acquainted with the necessary skills needed to ultimately be a good teacher. As a result, they become very motivated and inspired to be as passionate for the teaching profession as their role models. This shows how important it is to have good model teachers and eventually strive to be a good role model yourself for the children in your classroom to positively impact their perception on teachers. This results in bringing more value to the teaching profession as well as changing societal views on the teaching profession.

Studies show that those who are considering entering the teaching profession may be significantly influenced by their previous teachers. According to a study conducted by the National Bureau of Economic Research, individuals were more inclined to seek a profession in teaching if they had previously been exposed to high-performing teachers. This study affirms that being around high-performing teachers in schools increases interest in becoming a teacher by about 10% (Chingos & Peterson, 2011). Similarly, other studies highlighted the significance of in-service teacher's involvement in prospective teachers' professional development (Smith, 2001; Loughran, 1996). According to Nawabi et al. (2019), it was shown that parental perceptions have a dynamic role in children's education in terms of academic achievement, vocation choice, and ultimately affect their children's conduct toward career decision.

A study conducted by Hamre and Pianta (2001) found that individuals whose parents are teachers were more likely to choose this career than those who did not. This aspect significantly influences the aspiration to pursue a career in this field. Moreover, parents who are teachers are more likely to provide support and expose the satisfactions that come with the teaching profession to their children. Hence, it holds great significance for parents to cultivate and encourage these expressed interests in pursuing a career in teaching.

5.1.2 Working with children and adolescents

One notable sub-theme that emerged from the findings, addressing the primary research question of this dissertation, is the involvement of engaging with children and/or adolescents. This is confirmed by several studies which state that one of the initial teacher motivations for entering the teaching profession is working with children or adolescents (Sinclair et al., 2006; Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Liu & Ramsey, 2018). Participants A, F and D show that their initial motivation to enter this profession was the desire and love in working with children.

Through the analysis of this sub-theme, we can conclude that having strong relationships as well as helping children succeed are also essential factors to initiate the desire to begin the teaching profession. These will be further discussed later on in the chapter. It is also worth mentioning that whilst many teachers may pursue this career with a great desire to work with children, as they acquire more experience and face new obstacles, their motivation may change. For instance, a teacher who was initially motivated to enter the teaching profession because s/he liked to work with young children can discover that helping challenging students succeed or creating interesting learning inquiries provide them just as much satisfaction (Kulsoom & Awan, 2016).

Overall, even though the desire to work with children is a common motivation for entering the teaching profession, it is only one of many factors that may affect someone's decision to become a teacher, and it may change over time as teachers gain more experience and explore various facets of their teaching profession (Kulsoom & Awan, 2016).

5.1.3 Passion for teaching

A study published in the Journal of Teacher Education found that “passion for teaching is one of the most frequently mentioned motives for becoming a teacher” (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003, p.264). The findings from the gathered data, (participants D, E, F) indicate a deep love for teaching can have a significant impact and diminish the motivation overtime. If one is not passionate about teaching, the challenging factors of this profession may overcome its satisfactions, thus, result in individuals giving up on this career. Passion in teaching is very important for teachers for a number of reasons. For pre-service teachers, having a passion for teaching is particularly crucial since it may impact their attitudes and ideas towards teaching as well as their desire to continue a career in education. In fact, a study conducted by Johnson and Birkeland (2003), found that pre-service teachers who reported higher levels of passion towards teaching were more likely to feel prepared for the job’s responsibilities and have a positive self-concept of themselves as teachers.

Through the analysis of data, it is evident that participants who claimed that they entered this profession because they have a strong passion for teaching seem to be more enthusiastic to start teaching, interact with children and try to offer the best learning experience for all children than those who did not mention it. Moreover, Participant A claimed that this passion for teaching brings out the best of her. She is excited to learn new things, new concepts and stay updated on everyday life inquiries to grow as a person. This shows that this passion does not only benefit the children in the classroom, but also the teachers themselves. It is proven that a good attitude towards teaching is more frequent in pre-service teachers who are passionate about teaching, and this positive attitude can convert into a better sense of confidence and competence while working with students (Day et al., 2006). Besides, pre-service teachers who have a passion for teaching are more likely to be committed to the profession. This can help them stay motivated and dedicated to their work overtime, thus, retains teachers.

5.1.4 Teacher skills

The United States National Centre for Education Statistics (2018) asserts that teachers need to possess a number of skills and competences to succeed in this career. Based on the gathered data, Participant E's insights revealed that one of the initial motivations to become

a teacher stemmed from recognising positive qualities within herself that would contribute to being an effective teacher. Moreover, her friends, family and even her teachers saw a lot of potential and leadership skills that would be ideal for this career. From these observations, we can conclude that these perceptions directly influence the initial motivations of participants as they indicate their possession of skills that contribute to their effectiveness as teachers.

The belief in one's own ability to teach is one of the most crucial motivating variables for teachers (Grossman et al., 2009). Providing a comprehensive overview of the results pertaining to this particular sub-theme, it seems that pre-service teachers believe in their teaching abilities, and many of them argue that if they did not believe they have what it takes to do the job, they wouldn't have entered in the first place since it entails a lot of hard work and commitment. However, there was a consensus among the participants that more support during their training should be given to ensure that their teaching abilities are enhanced, and more learning takes place.

Studies (Grossman et al., 2009; Brackett et al., 2010) confirm that pre-service teachers view a range of skills as essential for their motivation and success as initial teachers. Among these abilities are understanding of pedagogy, classroom management, communication skills, and reflective practice. These abilities may be developed by new teachers throughout their pre-service training to help them succeed in the classroom and have a positive influence on their students' learning. From the data analysis, several participants admitted to possessing the necessary skills already and through their practicum they were able to put these skills into practice. This resulted in obtaining positive feedback from their examiners, satisfaction from the children's parents as well as help diverse children achieve and thrive. Moreover, due to its enormous relevance for teacher motivation, it can be observed that pupil engagement functions as an intermediary. This means that having strong teaching skills and enthusiasm for the subject matter may greatly influence students.

5.1.5 Student progress and relationship with pupils

This sub-theme delves into two key areas: the impact of teachers' relationships with students and the correlation between these relationships and students' academic progress.

As we already highlighted, numerous participants outlined that the main motivation to enter this career was to work and interact with children and/or adolescents. During the interviews, the same participants passionately expressed that working with children provides them with two significant sources of satisfaction. Firstly, they find immense joy in helping children thrive and achieve success, witnessing their growth and progress. Secondly, they emphasise the importance of building positive relationships with children, recognising it as a rewarding aspect of their work that fosters trust, communication, and mutual understanding. I consider it crucial to address this sub-theme concerning student advancement and building connections with pupils, as it has the potential to help teachers overcome challenging factors of the teaching profession such as disruptive behaviours in the classroom and also sustain teachers' motivation through their career.

The results from Participant B's data show that the students' positive response and excitement for the subject matter taught indicate a high degree of motivation. The research highlights that these elements offer people fulfilment and elation since they support their belief in their capacity as teachers. These results show that dynamic forces need to be shaped and transformed in order to increase teacher and student motivation (Day et al., 2006; Martin et al., 2016). In fact, in a study involving 168 high school teachers in the United States concluded that teachers who saw students making progress are more motivated to teach (Wang, et al., 2011). It is also important to keep in mind that students who like their teacher are more likely to favour the subject taught, which leads to increased participation. Thus, building positive relationships where the students feel heard and safe aids the teacher in everyday tasks that may seem challenging for other teachers who do not have positive relationships with students.

5.2 Difficulties of the teaching profession

This section is aimed at discussing the second research question; *'What are the challenging factors that influence the way this profession is perceived?'* The overall findings demonstrate that the challenging factors that negatively impact individuals' perception of the teaching profession can also have a significant influence on the motivation of new teachers. As it was already discussed before, research has shown that early teacher motivation is crucial for teacher retention, job satisfaction and ultimately student accomplishment (Richardson &

Watt, 2018). Hence, it holds great significance to examine closely the challenging factors in the Maltese classroom, as outlined by the participants, and take proactive measures to address them. The main challenging factors outlined by the participants included classroom management, high workload, salary, limited career progression opportunities and lack of respect to the teaching career.

5.2.1 Classroom management

Indeed, as previously identified, students play a crucial role in stimulating teacher motivation (Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Sinclair et al., 2006; Tang 2011; Liu & Ramsey, 2018). Nonetheless, one of the main challenging factors of this profession which was outlined by many participants was student behaviour and classroom management. The main aim in discussing this sub-theme is that in my opinion, these elements have the potential to undermine the initial motivation of teachers. Moreover, during the interviews, many participants have consistently verified my suspicion. The findings show that when teachers are unable to manage disruptive kids, motivation levels in the classroom decrease, which unfortunately leads to a negative perception of the teaching profession.

Findings from participants A, B, D, E and G reveal a sense of fear when expressing their feelings about this notion. As noted earlier in Chapter 2, establishing clear expectations and standards, controlling student behaviour, and dealing with disagreements and discipline concerns as they emerge are all essential components of effective classroom management (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2018). Nonetheless, some pre-service teachers felt that they did not have enough opportunities and exposure to different management techniques and how to go about different behaviours which students may exhibit in the classroom. This results in them not being prepared to tackle these situations effectively. Given this, it is my belief that on certain occasions, fear may overpower individuals' abilities, causing them to doubt their capability to effectively manage the classroom, even if they possess the necessary skills.

Another point which was raised by Participant D is that nowadays, teachers need to address diverse needs, including those with cultural differences. Recent findings highlight the progressive society's knowledge about various issues such as social classes, conflict, the

environment and poverty amongst others. This calls out the need for teachers to attain multicultural knowledge which enables them to meet the diverse learning needs of students (Maskit & Firstater, 2015). Unfortunately, many participants expressed their concern about their lack of preparation and knowledge for multicultural and multilingual classrooms. Similarly, research (Horst and Holeman 2007; Villegas et al., 2018) shows that teachers from different countries are not well prepared for this change.

5.2.2 High workload

Another challenge which was outlined by the participants was having high workloads, one which is more than they can handle and are prepared for. The participants feel that their increasing workload is mostly due to the responsibilities of lesson planning, grading student work and examinations. It is deemed crucial to talk about the subtheme of workload since it impacts teacher initial motivation to pursue the teaching profession and might have an impact on retention.

Findings from participants revealed that the amount of work that comes with the teaching profession may be a demotivating factor for many. In fact, many were disheartened by the amount of time it takes beyond work hours to plan lessons, respond to emails, make adaptations for students, and make reports about the students' achievements amongst others. During their practicum, the participants admitted that they felt very stressed and unmotivated. They did not have any time to socialise with friends and family, do things they usually enjoy doing and take breaks. A participant, D, confessed that this negatively impacted his mental health overall and if he did not have the will to succeed, he would not be where he is today as everything is very overwhelming. In a study conducted by Montgomery and Rupp (2005), it was found that high workloads negatively impact teachers' mental health. This was also associated with higher levels of stress and burnout amongst teachers.

Apart from that, participants F and G, added that teachers have a lot to do at once and face a lot of pressure from different stakeholders such as parents and the Senior Management Team (SMT). Moreover, findings from Participant E show that the curriculum is very vast and sometimes irrelevant to the children's needs. Based on the data findings, it becomes apparent that attempting to swiftly cover the assigned topics within a limited timeframe results in

burnout among pre-service teachers, let alone on teachers who need to cover the whole syllabus in a school year. Additionally, numerous participants argue that there are a lot of expectations that need to be fulfilled. Teachers are expected to achieve high academic outcomes for their students while making sure to reach all students with adapted work. They need to create a positive classroom environment that supports the students' social and emotional development and are also the ones who take the blame when something goes wrong, for instance if a child does not succeed. There is a consensus between the participants that teachers should be supported and offered the necessary resources to reduce the excessive workload. The results of this study show that the workload has a significant impact on teacher initial motivation and perception on the teaching profession. According to research, one of the key elements for teacher retention is how much teachers feel their workload is reasonable, which is highly correlated with job satisfaction (Ingersoll, 2017; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005).

5.2.3 Salary

The findings from all participants illustrate that the teacher salary does not reflect teacher knowledge and dedication. Undoubtedly, as several participants outlined, the teaching career is not for someone who seeks to have a good income. In my opinion, although society's perspective on this notion would argue that the number of holidays reflect the pay given, I believe that taking into account the additional hours spent working after school, teachers' salary is considerably inadequate.

During the interviews, a participant referred to a saying which argues that , if you pay peanuts, you will get monkeys. As we already outlined, society expects a lot from the teachers, and it does not come to a surprise why many pre-service teachers and in-service teachers are angry at what they are given in return. According to research (National Centre for Education Statistics, 2018), there is little regard for the teaching profession and teachers themselves when it comes to remuneration. Participants generally agreed that they felt their income was discouraging and did not accurately represent their workload. In fact, according to a report by Malta Union of Teachers (2019), teachers in Malta have long complained about their pay. The report noted that teachers earn less when compared to other European Union countries, which has resulted in a high rate of teacher turnover and difficulty in attracting new

teachers in Malta. In fact, a survey conducted by the MUT in 2020, found that the majority of Maltese teachers were not satisfied with their pay. According to the study, 81% of participants were dissatisfied with their present income, and 75% didn't think it was fair given the amount of work they were doing. Furthermore, 74% of respondents had thought about quitting the teaching field because of concerns with compensation and other aspects of their jobs. Ingersoll et al. (2014) adds to this by stating that the biggest worry for teacher satisfaction has been getting the deserved salary that other professional professions are receiving, such as medical, engineering, and law.

Thus, it is evident that a raise in salary is necessary to increase job satisfaction and teacher initial motivation as well as give more recognition to the career. The findings, which demonstrate that the profession's comparatively lower income can unfortunately create the perception that it carries less prestige compared to other esteemed occupations (Ingersoll et al., 2014). Furthermore, as highlighted by Montgomery et al. (2005), elevating teachers' remuneration is imperative in order to shift the perception of teaching as a vocation, transforming it from a position of low status to one of esteemed prestige. Despite this, as demonstrated in the findings, the pay alone is not necessary to change the way this profession is perceived and change teachers' motivation and satisfaction.

5.2.4 Limited career progression opportunities

The sub-theme of limited career progression opportunities was identified to be one of the challenges of the teaching profession as described by several participants. This is important for this research as it is not only affecting teacher motivation but also affecting the way this profession is perceived by individuals who wish to pursue this career.

Participant D claimed that unfortunately the lack of career progression compared to the number of years it takes to become a fully qualified teacher was a demotivation factor when he was thinking of entering this profession. Looking at other professions such as business, one can easily advance with experience, but in the teaching career there is not much one can do other than a teacher in the classroom. If one wishes to enter in a leadership role such as becoming part of the SMT team, s/he has to do a leadership course. According to a Talis report conducted in 2018, one of the main reasons for limited career professional

opportunities in the teaching profession is the hierarchical structure of education. It is argued that one significant factor contributing to the negative perception of the teaching career is the existence of a rigid hierarchical structure in many countries, which often results in teachers remaining in the same position throughout their entire careers (OECD, 2019).

It is noteworthy to mention that a significant number of participants express awareness of the limited career progression opportunities even before entering the profession and thus, this was not something that was considered to be a major demotivating factor for not pursuing this career. Nonetheless, many argue that they do see themselves going for the leadership course or eventually stay in the education sector but change position.

In spite of that, it is important to provide opportunities to motivate teachers to remain in the classroom. This can be achieved by providing the space for professional growth, recognition to the teaching profession as well as advancement. Some of the strategies which can aid in teacher motivation are professional development programmes which offer teachers the time and space to collaborate and learn for life, performance-based incentives that recognise and reward exceptional teaching performance as well as addressing work-life balance concerns of many teachers by offering more support and resources.

5.4.5 Lack of respect

During the interviews, several participants claimed that unfortunately, the teaching profession is not valued and respected by many individuals. Lack of respect for the teaching profession can be a significant demotivating factor for teachers. Teachers are essential to educating and forming the future generation, and when they don't feel their work is respected, it can affect their motivation and job happiness.

Numerous studies have revealed that teacher turnover and burnout are significantly influenced by lack of respect and recognition. According to a study conducted by Ingersoll and Merrill (2017), teachers who reported receiving less respect from their students, parents, and the community were more likely to suffer job unhappiness and were more likely to quit their jobs. Analysis from data revealed that the teaching profession is rarely promoted on social

media, even worse, the teaching profession is always promoted from a negative point of view. Participant A claimed that usually on social media forums, individuals always blame the teacher. Unfortunately, whatever the case, the teacher is never given the benefit of doubt.

Moreover, Participant C claimed that if these challenging factors which were mentioned earlier in the chapter; the salary, inadequate resources to support the teacher and high working loads amongst others are not addressed, the issue of not being respected as a professional will still persist. Unfortunately, the lack of respect for the teaching profession can have negative consequences for both teachers and students. It may cause fatigue, turnover, and teacher discontent, as well as a poor school climate that harms students' outcomes. Therefore, fostering a culture of respect for teachers is essential for developing a productive workplace that encourages teacher motivation, job satisfaction, and student success.

5.3 Support for pre-service teachers

This theme aims to answer the last research question of this dissertation: "*How are pre-service teachers supported through their course journey studies?*" This theme holds great significance as it directly influences the experiences of pre-service teachers and shapes their perception of the teaching profession.

The data analysis revealed that a substantial number of participants highlighted the importance of the teaching practice in this course. This provides pre-service teachers with valuable opportunities to engage in the teaching profession, navigate diverse scenarios, and establish connections between theory and practice, thereby fostering a profound understanding of teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). Studies found that supporting pre-service teachers in their course journey studies is very important since those are the most delicate years that can impact the rest of their teaching career. During those years, pre-service teachers are given the necessary skills, knowledge, and dispositions they need to be effective teachers (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). This will ensure that the pre-service teachers are ready and motivated to enter the teaching profession as fully qualified and capable teachers. Moreover, according to research, pre-service teachers who are offered great support throughout their academic career are more likely to continue

working as teachers. Providing pre-service teachers with the knowledge and assurance they need to succeed in the classroom can increase their job satisfaction and retention (Ingersoll & Strong, 2011). The results from data collected show that participants who had great mentors and found support when they needed had a more confident outlook to the teaching profession and the initial teacher programme overall rather than those who did not have. On the other hand, Participant D claimed that if it wasn't for his course friends he would not have survived since he did not have any support or help from his mentor or superiors. Thinking it through, maybe this is one of the reasons many pre-service students resign from the course and go straight to teaching without having the qualifications needed. Does the programme effectively nurture and guide the development of their skills, empowering them to further harness their potential, or does it inadvertently generate additional stress that undermines their self-confidence?

Findings from participants revealed that during their academic course, they had a lot of opportunities to interact with professionals in the field, share resources and discuss different scenarios and how they can take care of them in the most subtle and efficient way. Moreover, numerous participants pointed out the importance of the collaboration between them as pre-service teachers and experienced teachers. This promotes professional development and offers chances for reflection and feedback which is very needed to improve one's practise and pedagogy. A study by Ingersoll and Strong (2011) found that pre-service teachers who engage with experienced mentors are more likely to develop excellent teaching techniques and feel confident in their decision to pursue the teaching profession.

Nonetheless, Participant G added that receiving feedback was very important to improve her practise. Some participants claimed that they wished to have more time with mentors to provide them with more detailed feedback. On the other hand, several participants also claim that they received detailed feedback during coursework and teacher practise which helped them overcome several challenges. Patterns show that this depends on the mentor as well as time available to discuss student achievement and progress. Numerous studies (Kim & Lee, 2018; Koh & Hill, 2016) suggest that feedback is very beneficial for pre-service teachers. Feedback positively impacts pre-service teachers' instructional efficacy, reflective thinking, pedagogical knowledge understanding, teaching abilities, and pedagogical content

knowledge growth. Feedback has been shown to have a considerable beneficial influence on student progress, and this benefit is amplified when offered to teachers in order to improve their teaching techniques. These findings highlight the significance of providing feedback to pre-service teachers in order to improve their learning and performance. In fact, Debono (2019) discovered that assistance from colleagues, mentors and school administrators is critical to aid pre-service teachers' in their professional growth and development in Malta. A research study conducted by Tanti and Baldacchino (2018) revealed that student teachers in Malta believed that the guidance of their mentors at the school was crucial to their professional growth during practicum. The research emphasised how crucial it is to give student teachers constant encouragement and criticism during their practicum. Overall, we can agree that ongoing feedback should be given during the students' initial teacher programmes as well as through their teaching career since it creates possibilities for improvements as well as motivates them to become more effective teachers.

Through the data obtained, it shows that although pre-service teachers more or less are given the support needed for their professional development and growth, there is room for improvement. A study conducted locally by Schembri and Fenech (2016) found that pre-service teachers in Malta recognised the need for further assistance in areas such as classroom management, lesson planning and reflection. The study also uncovered that pre-service teachers thought support was frequently restricted and insufficient. Moreover, Borg and Cefai (2014), noted a number of difficulties encountered by student-teachers in Malta during their teaching practice, including a lack of feedback, support, and direction. The research emphasised the need of having more effective support mechanisms in place to assist student-teachers throughout their practicum experience.

5.4 Conclusion

Within this chapter, the results derived from data collected from the participating pre-service teachers in this research study were discussed. The interviews yielded profound perspectives into the initial motivations of teachers, the challenging factors of this profession as well as the support given to pre-service teachers in their course journey studies. As noted, although there are several challenges to this profession, pre-service teachers expressed their commitment and the desire to continue their journey to become fully qualified teachers.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion

There has consistently been a profound fascination in the elements that influence teacher motivation and why individuals choose to work in education. However, exploring initial teacher motivation and initial teacher education programmes in light of pre-service teachers has yet to be thoroughly investigated in Malta. The primary goal of this section is to emphasise key components of this investigation through a concise overview of the research conducted. Subsequently, I will proceed to offer recommendations derived from the valuable suggestions provided by the participants. Finally, I will address both the limitations of the study and propose actionable recommendations for future reference.

6.1 Highlights of the current study

This study explored the initial teacher motivation to pursue the teaching career together with the challenges of this profession as perceived by pre-service teachers. Moreover, it highlighted the initial teacher education programme offered at the University of Malta for teachers wanting to qualify for a Master's in teaching and learning in Primary or Secondary years degree. Previous studies on this subject demonstrated that there are similar types of motivations for choosing the teaching profession (Galea, 2020; Clandinin et al., 2015; Watt et al., 2013). Additionally, previous studies on the motivation of novice teachers have recognised three fundamental drivers for embarking on a teaching profession: intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations. (Day et al., 2006; Sims, 2017; Bezzina & Portelli, 2006; Attard Tonna & Calleja, 2021). The literature examined regarding teacher motivation illuminates the importance of exploring and nurturing the intrinsic drive to teach. Moreover, Sinclair (2008) highlights the importance of motivation as it can be a key factor in promoting teacher retention and reducing burnouts. It is argued that teachers are more likely to remain in the field and be successful teachers when they are inspired and passionate about what they do.

As already noted in Chapter 2, due to changes in the structures of society such as social status, income, teaching initial training, economic situation and other factors, interests and teacher motivation can change overtime (Jugović, I. et al., 2012; Swann et al.,

2010). The existing body of literature conclusively demonstrates that the initial drive to enter the teaching profession is primarily fuelled by intrinsic motives (Day et al., 2006). It is worth noting that while extrinsic factors may contribute to teacher dissatisfaction (Bezzina & Portelli, 2006), they do not diminish intrinsic motivation. Teacher motivation may experience a decline as a result of by the challenging factors of the teaching profession, including students' behaviour and classroom management, high workload, salary, limited career progression and decreased societal appreciation for the teaching profession. To summarise the pertinent literature related to job gratification consistently indicates that teachers typically find satisfaction in the act of teaching itself, while the challenging factors emerged from factors that are beyond the teachers' control. Studies (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Darling-Hammond, 2017) also outline the importance of the initial teaching programme as they aid and motivate pre-service teachers in pursuing the teaching profession. Ingersoll and Strong (2011) offer valuable insights suggesting that empowering pre-service teachers with the necessary knowledge and reassurance can have a profound impact on their job satisfaction and long-term commitment to the teaching profession. At the end of Chapter 2, it is noted that people entering the teaching profession compared to the need of teachers in schools is not promising (Grech,2017). Thus, teacher motivation needs to be addressed and effective initial teacher programmes need to be reformed.

In order to effectively investigate the factors influencing attraction and rejection towards the teaching profession, a qualitative research approach was determined to be the most suitable and effective. Interviews were thoughtfully employed to address the primary research inquiries and gain profound insights into the experiences of the eight pre-service individuals. Through meticulous data analysis, valuable insights were gleaned regarding the factors that drive individuals in choosing the teaching profession, what are the challenging factors of this profession and how are they supported during their course journey studies. The outcomes and conclusions have revealed a wealth of information. It was noted that although there are several challenges to this profession, pre-service teachers expressed their commitment and the desire to continue their journey to become fully qualified teachers.

6.2 Limitations and strengths

A research may have various constraints that impact the validity, generalisability, and reliability of its findings. While this study has generated a substantial amount of data through its findings, it is important to acknowledge its inherent limitations. This investigation was focused on pre-service teachers conducting an MTL course, therefore the findings are limited to the perceptions of the pre-service teachers. Given that only eight participants were included in this qualitative research study, the study lacked generalisations and statistical interpretations.

While the findings align with prior research, further investigation is required to ascertain the extent to which these findings can be applied in different contexts. This additional research will offer stronger evidence to readers, particularly within the local context. Considering these limitations, it would be valuable to explore individuals who have finished their studies and obtained their warrant, thus, have experience as teachers. Moreover, the data clearly indicated that comprehensive support plays a pivotal role in enhancing teacher motivation. Consequently, there is a pressing need for additional research to explore strategies for improving teacher support. The primary objective of this research study was to delve into the factors influencing teacher motivation to pursue this career, the challenges of the teaching profession and also the support given to pre-service teachers in their course journey studies.

Despite the study's limitations, the central information acquitted through an interpretivist approach can be considered trustworthy and authentic due to the participants' first-hand accounts. By sharing their personal experiences, they offered valuable insights into the factors that influenced their decision to pursue a career in teaching, as well as the aspects that either detracted from or reinforced their motivation within the context of the initial teacher education programme. The study is particularly significant since the suggestions for improvement proposed by the participants retain teachers.

6.3 Recommendations

Most often researchers take unexpected detours and directions, which in turn sparks interest and fascination. It is frequently advised that research raises more questions than it

answers in this regard. As a result, even while I am sure that the findings discussed here will add to our current understanding of the respective topic or themes, they also provide us ideas for future study inquiries. A list of suggestions that might be beneficial and practical for future study is provided below.

Longitudinal studies that engage individuals over a number of years should be a component of future research. This aids in determining if the beliefs maintained may evolve with time and changing situations. I believe that a narrative approach would be most beneficial in this case. The reflections would help us to determine what actually affects the motivations, satisfactions, and commitment to teaching. This, coupled with more in-depth interviews, would provide interesting information about the area.

When looking at the demographics, this research had a larger percentage of females compared with males (five female versus three male participants). This might be explained by the suggestion that female teachers predominate in primary schools, with this research serving as an example. This is supported by the studies (OECD, 2015; OECD, 2017), which demonstrate that few men are attracted to this profession due to gender bias which often arises very early on. In what follows, it becomes crucial to consider whether the findings of this research would have changed if more men had been enrolled. This indicates that future research should focus more on recruiting male participants so that it is possible to examine the roles and perspectives of male teachers on the construct of the first attractions to the teaching profession.

6.4 Concluding note

The central objective of this investigation is to examine closely the initial factors that inspire individuals to pursue a teaching career. Additionally, it seeks to delve into the inherent challenges associated with this profession and explore the supportive measures offered during the initial teacher programmes. The findings of this study looked at what influences teachers to choose their career and stay in it. It was observed that teachers possess inherent energies upon entering the profession, which do not require acquisition. This innate energy subsequently aids them in accomplishing their educational aims and fostering positive interactions within their professional and educational contexts. In

accordance with the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation among teachers, and help received during the initial teacher programme, the entire motivational approach is a tool that supports teachers throughout their entire profession.

This study affirms that student success and development are the key factors that significantly impact teacher motivation, as teachers are more motivated by their students' academic achievement. Moreover, support from mentors and other professionals during the initial teacher programme provides pre-service teachers the courage and motivation to pursue this career and become effective professionals in the field. It has been proven that, while individuals' motivation levels change depending on the problems they confront during their careers, data collected shows that determination and satisfactions that come with this career make it all worthwhile and serves as a sustaining force for teachers, encouraging their continued presence in the classroom. This phenomena may be explained by the teachers' deep faith in their professional knowledge and instructional abilities and their sincere desire to see the long-lasting results of their labour reflected in the academic success of their pupils over time.

References

- Ashiedu, Jennifer A. and Scott-Ladd, Brenda D. (2012). Understanding Teacher Attraction and Retention Drivers: Addressing Teacher Shortages. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*: Vol. 37: Iss. 11, Article 2.
- Attard Tonna, M., & Calleja, J. (2021): An investigation of the professional behaviour, status, career and identities of teachers in Malta, *European Journal of Teacher Education*, DOI: 10.1080/02619768.2021.1889508
- Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. (2012). Understanding the Australian Curriculum.
- Azhan, A., et al. (2016). Stress Among School Teachers, Why?
- Bamford, S. & Worth, J. (2017). Teacher Retention and Turnover Research. Is the Grass Greener Beyond Teaching? Report to Teacher Retention and Turnover Research, 32(3), 509-525.
- Berliner, D.C. (2005). The near impossibility of testing for teacher quality. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 56 (3), 205-213.
- Bezzina, C., & Camilleri, A. (2001). The professional development of teachers in Malta. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 24(2), 157-170.
- Bezzina, C., and V. Portelli. (2005). Teachers and Teaching in Malta: Some Key Issues. *Journal of Maltese Educational Research* 3 (2): 8–22.
- Bezzina, C., Caruana, S. (2019). Teacher Education Matters: transforming lives... transforming schools. University of Malta. Faculty of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/oar/bitstream/123456789/53406/3/2019.%20ITE%20in%20Malta.%20The%20long%20and%20winding%20road.%20Chapter%20Sultan%20a%20-%20Gelle%20-%20Caruana%20in%20Faculty%20volume%20%282%29.pdf>
- Borg, C., & Gatt, S. (2014). Education in Malta. In D. B. Edward, & M. J. Curran (Eds.), *International Handbook of Catholic Education: Challenges for School Systems in the 21st Century* (pp. 651-668). Springer.
- Borg, C., & Hughes, J. C. (2013). *Education and Society in Malta*. Springer.
- Brackett, M. A., Palomera, R., Mojsa-Kaja, J., Reyes, M. R., & Salovey, P. (2010). Emotion-regulation ability, burnout, and job satisfaction among British secondary-school teachers. *Psychology in the Schools*, 47(4), 406-417.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
- Bryman, A. (2012). *Social Research Methods*. New York: Oxford University Press Inc.

- Buhagiar, M., & Attard Tonna, M. (2015). *School-Based Mentoring in Initial Teacher Education*. Malta: Horizons.
- Cefai, C., & Malouff, J. (2020). *Teachers in Control: Managing the Stress of the Profession*.
- Chingos, M. M., & Peterson, P. E. (2011). It's easier to pick a good teacher than to train one: Familiar and new results on the correlates of teacher effectiveness. *Economics of Education Review*, 30(3), 449-465.
- Clandinin, J., Long, J., Schaefer, L., Downey, A. C., Steeves, P., Pinnegar, E., Robblee, S., & Wnuk, S. (2015). Early career teacher attrition: intentions of teachers beginning, *Teaching Education*, 26:1, 1-16, DOI: 10.1080/10476210.2014.996746
- Cohen, D & Crabtree, B. (2006). *Qualitative Research Guidelines Project*. Retrieved from <http://www.qualres.org/HomeSemi-3629.html>
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., Morrison, K. (2007). *Research Methods in Education*. New York: Routledge.
- Coldwell, D. & Herbst, F. (2004). *Business Research*. New York: JUTA and Company LTD.
- Crețu, D. (2017). Hopes and fears of teacher candidates concerning the teaching profession. *MATEC Web of Conferences*, 121, 12002.
- Crow, G., Wiles, T., Heath, S. Carles, V. (2006). Research ethics and data quality: the implications of informed consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*. Vol. 9(2): pp.83-95.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2017). Teacher education around the world: What can we learn from international practice? *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(3), 291-309.
- Dawson, C. (2009). *Introduction to Research Methods*. Oxford, United Kingdom: How to Books.
- Day, C., Kington, A., Stobart, G., & Sammons, P. (2006). The personal and professional selves of teachers: Stable and unstable identities. *British Educational Research Journal*, 32(4), 601–616.
- Debono, D. (2019). Perceptions of support among novice teachers in Malta. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(3), 342-359.
- Department for Education. (2013). *The National Curriculum in England*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4/the-national-curriculum-in-england-framework-for-key-stages-1-to-4>
- Desimone, L. M. (2011). A primer on effective professional development. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(6), 68-71.

- Dey, I. (2005). *Qualitative Data Analysis. A User-Friendly Guide for Social Scientists*. London: Routledge.
- Dray, B. & Thomas, C. (2010). Teaching is NOT a profession: How general and special education teacher education have failed. 10.1108/S0270-4013(2010)0000020015.
- European Commission. (2019). *Education and Training Monitor*. Retrieved from https://education.ec.europa.eu/sites/default/files/document-library-docs/et-monitor-report-2019-malta_en.pdf
- European Commission. (2020). *Teachers in Europe Careers, Development and Well-being*. Retrieved from <https://eurydice.eacea.ec.europa.eu/publications/teachers-europe-careers-development-and-well-being>
- European Commission. (2022). *Teachers' and school heads' salaries and allowances in Europe 2020/2021*. European Education and Culture Executive Agency. doi:10.2797/731017
- Feiman-Nemser, S. (2001). From preparation to practice: Designing a continuum to strengthen and sustain teaching. *Teachers College Record*, 103(6), 1013-1055.
- Fokkens-Bruinsma, M., and Canrinus, E. (2014). Motivation to become a teacher and engagement to the profession.: evidence from different contexts. *Int. J. Educ. Res.* 65, 65–74. doi: 10.1016/j.ijer.2013.09.012
- Galea, F. (2020). *Actions Speak Louder than Words: Investigating Teacher Attrition in Malta*.
- Ganong, L. H. (1987). Integrative reviews of nursing research. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 10 (11), 1-11.
- Garza, R., & Smith, S. F. (2015). Pre-service teachers' blog reflections: Illuminating their growth and development. *Cogent Education*, 2(1), 1-15. doi:10.1080/2331186X.2015.1066550
- Giordano, J.; O'Reilly, M.; Taylor, H. (2007). Confidentiality and autonomy: the challenge(s) of offering researcher participants a choice of disclosing their identity. *Qualitative Health Research* 17:pp. 264-275.
- Gomes, C., & Palazzo, J. (2017). Teaching career's attraction and rejection factors: Analysis of students and graduates perceptions in teacher education programs. *Ensaio (Rio De Janeiro, Brazil)*,25(94), 90-113.
- Government of Malta. (n.d.). *Education in Malta*. Retrieved from <https://www.gov.mt/en/Life%20Events/Pages/Moving%20to%20Malta/Education.aspx>
- Grech, D. (2017). *Teachers' Union Urges Government to Address Shortage of Teachers*. Malta Today, October 4.

- Grix, J. (2010). *The Foundations of Research* (Second ed.). Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grossman, P., Hammerness, K., & McDonald, M. (2009). Redefining teaching, re-imagining teacher education. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 15(2), 273-289.
- Gu, Q., & Day, C. (2007). Teachers' resilience: A necessary condition for effectiveness. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(8), 1302–1316.
- Hamre, B. K., & Pianta, R. C. (2001). Early teacher-child relationships and the trajectory of children's school outcomes through eighth grade. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 52(4), 336-347.
- Holstein, J. & Gubrium, J.F. (2003). *Inside Interviewing. New Lenses. New Concerns.* California, USA: Sage.
- Horst, H, and A. Holmen. (2007). Bringing multicultural education into the mainstream. Developing schools for minority and majority students. In *Global Migration and Education: Schools, Children and Families*, 17 - 33. Edited by L. Adams and A. Kirova. New York: Routledge
- Imam, A. (2011). Quality and excellence in teacher education: issues & challenges in India. *International journal of multidisciplinary research*, 1 (7): 388-397.
- Ingersoll, R. M., & Merrill, L. (2017). The impact of teacher working conditions on teaching and learning. *Review of Educational Research*, 87(4), 803-846.
- Ingersoll, R., & Strong, M. (2011). The Impact of Induction and Mentoring Programs for Beginning Teachers: A Critical Review of the Research. *Review of Educational Research*, 81(2), 201-233.
- Ingersoll, R., Perda, D., & May, H. (2014). An analysis of the effects of teacher qualification on student achievement in the core subjects in Grade 8 using the 2003 NAEP. Manuscript in preparation.
- Johnson, S. M., & Birkeland, S. E. (2003). Pursuing a "sense of success": New teachers explain their career decisions. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 54(3), 244-256.
- Jugović, I. et al. (2012). Motivation and personality of preservice teachers in Croatia. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 40(3), 271-287.
- Kelemen, G. (2015). Developing Professional Knowledge in the Initial Teacher Education. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Volume 180, 2015, Pages 357-364, ISSN 1877-0428. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.02.129>.
- Kim, J., & Lee, J. (2018). The impact of feedback on preservice teachers' teaching efficacy and reflective thinking. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 7(4), 92-100.

- Klassen, R. M., & Chiu, M. M. (2011). The occupational commitment and intention to quit of practicing and pre-service teachers: Influence of self-efficacy, job stress, and teaching context. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 36(2), 114-129.
- Klein, P. (2005). Epistemology. In *The Routledge Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Taylor and Francis. Retrieved from <https://www.rep.routledge.com/articles/overview/epistemology/v-2>
- Koh, J. H. L., & Hill, S. (2016). Effects of feedback on preservice teachers' lesson planning and reflection. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 55, 231-241.
- Kulsoom, H., & Awan, M. R. (2016). Understanding the motivational factors influencing teachers to become teachers. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(20), 128-136.
- Liu, S., & Ramsey, J. (2018). Teachers' motivations for entering and remaining in the profession. *Journal of Educational Research and Practice*, 8(2), 146-157.
- Lortie, D.C. (1975). *Schoolteachers: A Sociological Study*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Loughran, J. (1996). *Developing reflective practice: Learning about teaching and learning through modelling*. London/ Washington, DC: Falmer Press.
- Lune, H. & Berg, B.L. (2017). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Essex: Pearson Education Limited.
- Malta Union of Teachers. (2019). *MUT Educational Policy Document 2019*. Retrieved from <https://education.gov.mt/en/resources/Pages/Teachers-Resources.aspx>
- Martin, A. J., Yin, H., & Mayall, H. J. (2016). Enhancing teacher well-being and classroom effectiveness through the “my work–my life” framework and professional learning module. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 76, 34–47.
- Maskit, D., & Firstater, E. (2016). Preschool Teachers' Perspectives on Teaching as a Profession and Pedagogical Change. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 30(2), 200-210.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012). *A realist approach for qualitative research*. London: SAGE.
- Maynard, M. (1994). Methods, practice and epistemology: the debate about feminism and research. In Mary Maynard & Jane Purvis (Eds.), *Researching women's lives from a feminist perspective* (p.10-27). London: Taylor and Francis.
- Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA] : Teacher Quality and Educational Leadership Taskforce [MTQEL]. (2003). Preliminary analysis, unpublished, data gathered in 2002 for the MCEETYA biennial study on teacher supply and demand.

- Ministry for Education and Employment. (n.d). Framework for the Education Strategy for Malta 2014-2024: Sustaining Foundations, Creating Alternatives, Increasing Employability.
- Ministry of Education and Employment. (2012). A National Curriculum Framework for All. Retrieved from <https://curriculum.gov.mt/en/Resources/The-NCF/Documents/NCF.pdf>
- Ministry of Education and Employment. (2012). Teachers' Code of Ethics and Practice. The Council for the Teaching Profession in Malta
- Montgomery, C., & Rupp, A. A. (2005). A meta-analysis for exploring the diverse causes and effects of stress in teachers. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 28(3), 458-486.
- National Centre for Education Statistics. (2018). Characteristics of Public Elementary and Secondary School Teachers in the United States: Results From the 2015-16 National Teacher and Principal Survey.
- National Education Association. (2014). The status of the American public school teacher: A report from the American Teacher Panel.
- Nawabi, S., Javed, M.Q., Shujaulla, S., and Ulfat, H. (2019). Parental influence on career choice of their children: literature review. *International Journal of Advanced Research (IJAR)* 7(3), 221-227. <https://www.journalijar.com/article/27078/parental-influence-on-career-choice-of-their-children:-literature-review/>.
- Nias, J. (1989). *Primary Teachers Talking: A Study of Teaching as Work*. London: Routledge.
- Noddings, N. (2013). *Education and democracy in the 21st century*. New York: Teachers College Press
- OECD (2005). *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*. Paris: OECD. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/edu/school/34990905.pdf>
- OECD. (2009). *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS (OECD Education Working Papers, No. 97)*. Retrieved from <https://www.oecd.org/education/school/43023606.pdf>
- OECD. (2015). *What lies behind gender inequality in education? PISA in Focus, No. 49*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/5js4xffhhc30-en>.
- OECD. (2017). *Gender imbalances in the teaching profession. Education Indicators in Focus, No. 49*, OECD Publishing, Paris, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/54f0ef95-en>.
- OECD. (2019). *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/1d0bc92a-en>.
- Oteer, R. (2015). *Stress at work and its subsequent problems among teachers of the public*.

- Prawat, R.S., Floden, R.E. (1994). Philosophical Perspectives on Constructivist Views of Learning. *Educational Psychology*, 29 (1), 37-48.
- Pritchard, D. (2017). *Epistemology*. United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Reeve, J., & Jang, H. (2006). What teachers say and do to support students' autonomy during a learning activity. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 98(1), 209–218.
- Richardson, P. W., Karabenick, S. A., & Watt, H.M. (2014). *Teacher motivation: Theory and practice*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research*. Malden, USA: Blackwell.
- Rossmann, G.B. & Rallis, S.F. (2012). *Learning in the Field – An Introduction to Qualitative Research*. Amherst, USA: University of Massachusetts.
- Rubin, H.J. & Rubin, I.S. (2012). *Qualitative Interviewing. The Art of Hearing Data*. London: Sage.
- Ryan, G. (2018). Introduction to positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. *Nurse Researcher*, 25(4), 14-20.
- Schembri, C., & Fenech, A. (2016). Support needs of pre-service teachers: A qualitative study from Malta. *Journal of Education for Teaching*, 42(2), 167-181.
- Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the Philosophical Underpinnings of Research: Relating Ontology and Epistemology to the Methodology and Methods of the Scientific, Interpretive, and Critical Research Paradigms. *English language teaching*, 5(9), 9-16.
- Seale, C. (1999). Quality in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 5 (4), 465-478.
- Sexton, M. (2007). Evaluating teaching as a profession-implications of a research study for the work of the teaching council. *Irish Educational Studies*, 26(1), 79-105.
- Silverman, D. (2006). *Interpreting Qualitative Data*. London: Sage
- Sinclair, C. (2008). Initial and changing student teacher motivation and commitment to teaching. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 36, 79–104. [10.1080/13598660801971658](https://doi.org/10.1080/13598660801971658)
- Sinclair, C., Dowson, M., & Mcinerney, D. (2006). Motivations to teach: psychometric perspectives across the first semester of teacher education. *Teachers college record*, 108, 1132-1154.
- Smith, K. (2001). Professional knowledge of teacher teachers. Paper presented at the AERA-conference.

- Smith, T.W. & Strahan, D. (2004). Toward a prototype of expertise in teaching: A descriptive case study. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 55(4); 357-371.
- Swann, M., McIntyre, D., Pell, T., Hargreaves, L. & Cunningham, M. (2010). Teachers' conceptions of teacher professionalism in England in 2003 and 2006. *British Educational Research Journal*, 36(4), 549-571.
- Tang, W. L. (2011). An empirical study of college English teachers' teaching motivation. *Contemporary Modern Languages Studies*, 4, 29-33
- Tanti, M., & Baldacchino, G. (2018). Perceptions of Maltese student teachers on support received during practicum. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 9(29), 28-36.
- Taylor, P. C. & Medina, M. N. D. (2013). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to multiparadigmatic. *Meaning Centered Education*, 1.
- Taylor, S.J., Bogdan, R. & DeVault, M. (2016). *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource*. Hoboken, New Jersey, USA: John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- The World Bank. (2019). Malta Education Sector Review. Retrieved from <https://datatopics.worldbank.org/education/country/malta>
- Theoharis, G. (2019). The power of teacher autonomy. *Educational Leadership*, 76(6), 72-75.
- Tichenor, M., & Tichenor, J. (2004). Understanding Teachers' Perspectives on Professionalism. *The Professional Teacher*, 27(1-2), 89
- Unanma, A. O., Abugu, H. O., Dike, R.C., Umeobika, U. C. (2013). Relationship between teachers' educational qualifications and students' achievement in chemistry: A case study of Owerri West LGA. *Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 1(1): 05-10.
- Valley, I. (2006). Teaching career: a deliberate professional choice? *Revista Brasileira De Estudos Pedagogicos*, v. 87, n. 216, p. 178-187.
- Villegas, A. M., K. La Mora, A. D. Martin, and T. Mills. (2018). Preparing Future Mainstream Teachers to Teach English Language Learners: A Review of the Empirical Literature. *The Educational Forum* 82 (2): 138–155. doi:10.1080/00131725.2018.1420850.
- Wang, J. H., & Wang, S. C. (2011). The relationship between teacher motivation and student achievement: A study of US high school teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 27(6), 1135-1143.
- Watt, H. M. G., Richardson, P. W. & Pietsch, J. (2013). Choosing to Teach in the "STEM" Disciplines: Characteristics and Motivations of Science, ICT, and Mathematics Teachers. *Mathematics: Essential Research, Essential Practice*, 2, 795-804.
- Zammit Mangion, J. (1992). The 1988 Education Act : three years after. In: S. J. A. Clews (ed.), *The Malta Year Book 1992*. Malta: De La Salle Brothers Publications, pp. 450-454

Appendices

Appendix 1: Information letter

04/05/22

Information letter

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Jessica Aquilina, and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters in Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Years. I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled "***An investigation into the attraction and rejection factors to the teaching profession: A Maltese case study***"; this is being supervised by Dr Michelle Attard Tonna. This letter is an invitation to participate in this study. Below you will find information about the study and about what your involvement would entail, should you decide to take part.

The aim of my study is to investigate the attraction and rejection factors of pre-service teachers to the teaching profession. Moreover, it will provide stakeholders in education, an opportunity to reflect on the difficulties that may arise with regards to this issue, but also to consider possible actions that can be taken in order to incite teachers' love for learning and teaching, without the pressure of the challenges faced especially when in training. Your participation in this study would help contribute to a better understanding of various challenges and attractions of the teaching career in the local Maltese scenario. Any data collected from this research will be used solely for purposes of this study.

Should you choose to participate, you will be asked to participate in a semi-structured interview that will be done on a one-to-one basis. This interview could take place online via the Zoom software or else face-to-face. During this interview which will take approximately thirty-five (35) to forty-five (45) minutes, you will be invited to discuss some questions that will be related to the reasons why individuals choose the teaching career, what gives them hope, the rejection factors of this profession as well as the challenges faced whilst in training. Moreover, you will be invited to discuss issues, if any, that you may have considered before entering the teaching profession.

Data collected from the interviews will be treated confidentially, anonymized and shall only be accessed by the researcher of this study and by my supervisor Dr Michelle Attard Tonna.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; in other words, you are free to accept or refuse to participate, without needing to give a reason. You are also free to withdraw from the study at any time, without needing to provide any explanation and without any negative repercussions for you. Should you choose to withdraw, any data collected from your interview will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.

If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you. If you choose to participate, please note that there are no direct benefits to you, however, your contribution to the study may possibly lead to an identification of reasons for the rejection and attraction factors to the teaching career and it may as well encourage stakeholders to consider actions which can possibly aid in creating better working conditions for teachers.

Please note also that, as a participant, you have the right under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation to access, rectify and where applicable ask for the data concerning you to be erased. All data collected will be stored and retained for one (1) year within the completion of the study in a password protected software and then destroyed.

A copy of this information sheet is being provided for you to keep and for future reference.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Should you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me by e-mail aquilina.jessica.18@um.edu.mt ; you can also contact my supervisor via email: michelle.attard-tonna@um.edu.mt

Sincerely,

Jessica Aquilina
jessica.aquilina.18@um.edu.mt

Dr. Michelle Attard Tonna
michelle.attard-tonna@um.edu.mt

Appendix 2: Consent form

Participant's Consent Form

An investigation into the attraction and rejection factors to the teaching profession: A Maltese case study.

I, the undersigned, give my consent to take part in the study conducted by Jessica Aquilina. This consent form specifies the terms of my participation in this research study.

1. I have been given written and/or verbal information about the purpose of the study; I have had the opportunity to ask questions and any questions that I had were answered fully and to my satisfaction.
2. I also understand that I am free to accept to participate, or to refuse or stop participation at any time without giving any reason and without any penalty. Should I choose to participate, I may choose to decline to answer any questions asked. In the event that I choose to withdraw from the study, any data collected from me will be erased as long as this is technically possible (for example, before it is anonymised or published), unless erasure of data would render impossible or seriously impair achievement of the research objectives, in which case it shall be retained in an anonymised form.
3. I understand that I have been invited to participate in a Qualitative Research in which the researcher will conduct a semi-structured interview to *explore/investigate/analyse* the attraction and rejection factors on the teaching profession. I am aware that the interview will take approximately thirty-five (35) to forty-five (45) minutes. I understand that the interview is to be conducted in a place and at a time that is convenient for me.
4. I understand that *there are no direct benefits to me from participating in this study*. I also understand that this research may benefit others by: shedding light on the attraction and rejection factors of pre-service teachers to the teaching profession. Moreover, it will provide stakeholders in education with an opportunity to not only reflect on the difficulties which may arise from this issue, but also to consider possible actions that can be taken in order to combat the hardships faced upon entering this profession.
5. I understand that, under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and national legislation, I have the right to access, rectify, and where applicable, ask for the data concerning me to be erased.
6. I understand that all data collected will be *erased/stored in an anonymised form* for one (1) year within *the completion of the study in a password protected software and then destroyed*.
7. I have been provided with a copy of the information letter and understand that I will also be given a copy of this consent form.

8. I am aware that, by marking the first-tick box below, I am giving my consent for this semi-structured interview to be audio recorded and converted to text as it has been recorded (transcribed).

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

€ I agree to this semi-structured interview being audio recorded.

€ I do not agree to this semi-structured interview being audio recorded.

9. I am aware that extracts from my interview may be reproduced in these outputs, either in anonymous form, or using a pseudonym [a made-up name or code – e.g. respondent A].

10. I am aware that, by marking the first tick-box below, I am asking to review extracts from my interview transcript that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs, before these are published. I am also aware that I may ask for changes to be made, if I consider these to be necessary.

MARK ONLY IF AND AS APPLICABLE

€ I would like to review extracts of my interview transcript that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before these are published.

€ I would not like to review my interview transcript extracts that the researcher would like to reproduce in research outputs before these are published.

11. I am aware that the semi-structured interview will be held online; the researcher will use Zoom and will activate the *Require Encryption for 3rd party endpoints SIP/H-323* function. The researcher will *video record/only audio record* the session.

12. I am aware that my data will be pseudonymised; i.e., my identity will not be noted on transcripts or notes from my interview, but instead, a code will be assigned. The codes that link my data to my identity will be stored securely and separately from the data, in an encrypted file on the researcher's password-protected computer, and only the researcher, academic supervisor/s and examiners will have access to this information. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cabinet/drawer. Any material that identifies me as a participant in this study will be stored securely *for 1 year within completion of study and then destroyed*.

13. I am aware that my identity and personal information will not be revealed in any publications, reports or presentations arising from this research.

I have read and understood the above statements and agree to participate in this study.

Name of participant: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Jessica Aquilina
jessica.aquilina.18@um.edu.mt

Dr Michelle Attard Tonna
michelle.attard-tonna@um.edu.mt

Appendix 3: Permission letter

Request for permission to conduct research [in schools/hospitals/etc.]

Dear student,

My name is Jessica Aquilina, and I am a student at the University of Malta, presently reading for a Masters in Teaching and Learning in Early Childhood and Primary Years. I am presently conducting a research study for my dissertation titled “An investigation into the attraction and rejection factors to the teaching profession: A Maltese case study”. This study aims to investigate the attraction and rejection factors of pre-service teachers to the teaching profession. Moreover, it will provide stakeholders in education, an opportunity to reflect on the difficulties that may arise with regards to this issue, but also to consider possible actions that can be taken in order to incite teachers’ love for learning and teaching, without the pressure of the challenges faced especially when in training. This project is being conducted under the supervision of Dr Michelle Attard Tonna.

I am hereby seeking your permission to interview students who are following a Masters course in Teaching and Learning. My data collection methods will involve a semi-structured interview that will be done on a one-to-one basis. This interview could take place online via the Zoom software or else face-to-face. During this interview which will take approximately thirty-five (35) to forty-five (45) minutes, the participant will be invited to discuss some questions that will be related to the reasons why individuals choose the teaching career, what gives them hope, the rejection factors of this profession as well as the challenges faced whilst in training. Moreover, they will be invited to discuss issues, if any, that they may have considered before entering the teaching profession.

Participation will be entirely voluntary, and participants will be free to withdraw at any point, without any repercussions. Data collected will be pseudonymised, thus, the participants’ identity will not be noted on transcripts or notes from the researcher’s interview, but instead, a code will be assigned. The codes that link my data to my identity will be stored securely and separately from the data, in an encrypted file on the researcher’s password-protected computer, and only the researcher, academic supervisor/s and examiners will have access to this information. Any hard-copy materials will be placed in a locked cabinet/drawer. Any material that identifies me as a participant in this study will be stored securely *for 1 year within completion of study and then destroyed.*

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact me or my supervisor; both our contact details are provided below.

Thank you for your kind consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Jessica Aquilina
jessica.aquilina.18@um.edu.mt

Dr. Michelle Attard Tonna
michelle.attard-tonna@um.edu.mt

Appendix 4: Permission approval



L-Università
ta' Malta

Office of the Registrar

University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 2385/6
registrar@um.edu.mt

www.um.edu.mt

14 June 2022

Jessica Aquilina
Emmjos, 14
De Warsbergh Street
Gudja GDJ 1350

Student code: 370000L

Dear Jessica Aquilina

I refer to your request for permission to contact University of Malta students to participate in the research you will be conducting for the dissertation which you will be submitting in partial fulfilment for the degree of Master in Teaching and Learning.

The Office of the Registrar finds no objection to your request, subject to the approval of the Faculty Research Ethics Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Colin Borg
Academic Registrar

Appendix 5: Interview questions

1. Can you tell me more about yourself?
2. Are you following the teaching course full time or part time?
3. What subject area are you specialising in?
4. Why did you decide to enter the teaching profession considering there are so many other professions to choose from?
5. Who/what influenced your decision to become a teacher?
6. What passions do you bring to teaching?
7. What do you expect to achieve from being an teacher? (Skills, professional development etc)
8. What is your philosophy of teaching? (Inclusion, parental involvement, stimulating educational environment, hands-on activities, high expectations etc) and why do you believe in these notions?
9. What type of orientation/training process is provided for pre-service teachers?
10. Do you think your course prepares you and helps you achieve the needed skills to cope in this profession? Why?
11. What can be improved to aid pre-service teachers pursue this career?
12. What are the difficulties of the teaching profession?
13. Do you think these difficulties are neutral for all the teachers in the world or are more relevant in Malta?
14. What are the satisfactions of this job?
15. Do you think there is a shortage of qualified teachers in Malta? Why?
16. What priority measures should be taken to make the teaching profession more attractive?
17. What motivates you to continue pursuing this career?
18. How can the government motivate pupils to peruse this career?

Appendix 6: Ethical approval



Faculty of Education

University of Malta
Msida MSD 2080, Malta

Tel: +356 2340 3058/2932
educ@um.edu.mt

www.um.edu.mt/educ

12th July 2022

RE: Application for Research Ethics Clearance EDUC-2022-00112 Jessica Aquilina

Dear Jessica Aquilina,

With reference to your application EDUC-2022-00112 Jessica Aquilina for Research Ethics clearance, I am pleased to inform you that **FREC finds no ethical or data protection issues in terms of content and procedure.**

You may therefore proceed to approach potential informants to collect data using the tools/documents outlined in this application.

You are reminded that it is your responsibility - under the guidance of your supervisor - to distribute Information Letters and Consent/Assent Forms that are written in appropriate and correct English and Maltese.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Gravina".

Dr Joseph Gravina
Chairperson Faculty Research Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education