

# Teachers' motivation at a private university in the Mekong Delta

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**Abstract:** This article investigates the teaching motivation of 11 lecturers at a private university in the Mekong Delta, focusing on internal and external factors influencing their job satisfaction and performance. Through qualitative interviews, key motivators emerged: intrinsic passion for teaching, extrinsic factors like income and job stability, and community support. Altruistic motivations foster collaboration and job satisfaction. This study addresses a crucial gap in research on teacher leadership in Vietnam's tertiary education, highlighting the importance of a holistic approach to enhance teaching effectiveness and create a supportive academic environment.

**Keywords:** Teaching motivation; intrinsic factors; extrinsic factors; altruistic motivation; professional development

## 1. Introduction

Motivation drives individuals to act (Dornyei & Otto, 1998) and is divided into intrinsic motivation, stemming from personal interest, and extrinsic motivation, influenced by external rewards (Reeve, 1995). Research on teacher motivation shows mixed outcomes; English language teachers often emphasize intrinsic factors, while Spanish language teachers lean toward extrinsic motivators (Gironzetti & Munoz-Basols, 2022). In Chinese higher education, both intrinsic (peer recognition, satisfaction) and extrinsic (tenure, pay raises) motivations influence research engagement, with intrinsic factors generally considered more effective (Bai & Millwater, 2011). Understanding these motivations is vital, particularly given policies aimed at enhancing research engagement (Dai, 2008). Altruistic motivations are essential in teaching, impacting engagement and commitment. Bai and Millwater (2011) assert that teachers driven by a sense of purpose are more likely to engage altruistically, aiming to positively influence students. Borg (2009) emphasizes that such motivations shape teachers' professional identities, while Gironzetti and Munoz-Basols (2022) note that commitment to student success often arises from altruistic drives. Yuan, Sun, and Teng (2016) further highlight the desire to support student development as a key motivator. Together, these findings demonstrate how altruistic motivations enhance teaching practices and create a supportive educational environment.

### 1.1. Research gaps

Limited research has specifically examined the effects of teacher leadership within the context of tertiary education in Vietnam, particularly in the Mekong Delta. Existing studies tend to concentrate from kindergarten to high school in Vietnamese educational system of Ministry of Education and Training. That will have a significant gap regarding the dynamics of teacher leadership and motivation at the university level in this region.

### 1.2. Research questions

(1). What internal motivations influence the teaching motivation of lecturers at a private university in the Mekong Delta?

(2). How do external factors like income and job stability affect the job satisfaction of these lecturers?

(3). In what ways does a passion for teaching affect the performance and retention of lecturers, and how does community support influence their teaching motivation and overall job satisfaction?

## 2. Method and results

### 2.1. Method

The research employed a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative methodologies to comprehensively explore teaching motivation among lecturers at a private university in the Mekong Delta. Additionally, in-depth interviews with 11 lecturers were conducted to collect qualitative data, facilitating a deeper understanding of the complexities behind the motivational factors identified in the surveys. These interviews focused

on personal experiences, perceptions of professional development opportunities, and the influence of community support.

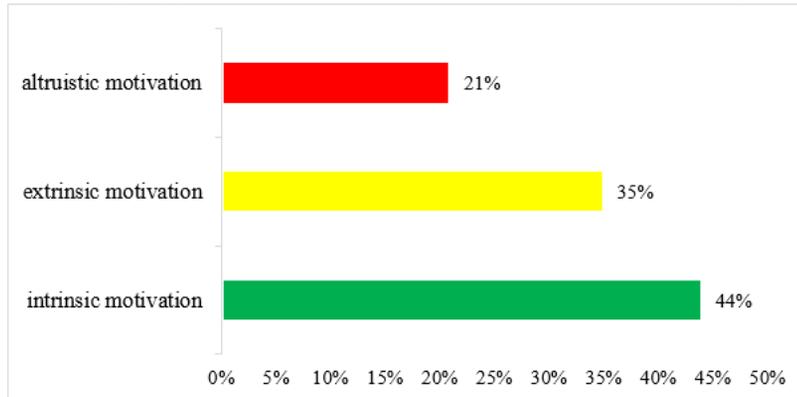


Table 2.1. Teacher motivation in job satisfaction

## 2.2. Results from questionnaire

### 2.2.1. The intrinsic motivation

About 44% of the lecturers said they feel a strong inner drive to take part in professional development, showing that several factors influence their motivation to teach. The study highlights three main reasons. First, passion for teaching is the biggest motivator, with 62% of participants saying that a real love for teaching and their subject keeps them engaged. Second, personal satisfaction is important, as 21% of the lecturers mentioned that the happiness they get from student success and their own growth boosts their motivation. Lastly, professional development matters too, with 17% of respondents noting that chances for personal and professional growth help increase their motivation and involvement in teaching.

These findings show that teacher motivation is complex. Lecturers explained that when professional development opportunities match their personal interests and teaching goals, they become more engaged and retain skills better. This highlights the need for development programs that connect with what individual lecturers care about. Additionally, lecturers pointed out that their happiness from learning is linked to their willingness to share ideas with colleagues, creating a supportive and enriching learning environment.

### 2.2.2. The extrinsic motivation

Approximately 35% of participants identified extrinsic factors, such as professional recognition and financial incentives, as important motivators for teachers. However, many expressed concerns that focusing too much on these external rewards

could lead to only superficial involvement in professional development. The findings highlight several key factors influencing teachers' motivation,

with job security being the most significant. About 48% of respondents indicated that stability in employment is crucial for enhancing their motivation levels, emphasizing the importance of a secure work environment in fostering a dedicated teaching workforce. Additionally, 39% of teachers pointed out that salary and benefits are essential motivators, as competitive compensation directly affects their job satisfaction

and commitment. Recognition and rewards were noted by 13% of participants, illustrating that acknowledgment from peers, administration, and the community can significantly boost motivation.

### 2.2.3. The altruistic motivation

Around 21% of lecturers indicated that their desire to benefit students and colleagues significantly motivates their engagement in professional development. They noted that collaborative learning environments foster a sense of community and shared responsibility, enhancing their commitment to teaching. The study identifies several key factors driving altruistic motivation among teachers. Notably, 12% of their motivation stems from a desire to make a difference, as teachers often draw inspiration from the wish to positively impact their students' lives, which deepens their commitment to their roles. Furthermore, student success serves as a major motivator for 71% of teachers; the joy they experience from witnessing their students' academic and personal achievements reinforces their effectiveness. Community engagement also plays a vital role, with 13% of teachers motivated to contribute beyond the classroom through projects that support students and families. Lastly, about 4% of altruistic teachers actively seek collaborative environments where they can share knowledge and resources with colleagues, which enhances their motivation through a sense of teamwork. Together, these factors highlight the profound influence of altruistic motivations on teachers' dedication and effectiveness. The findings suggest that fostering these motivations is essential for creating a collaborative culture within the university, as lecturers who feel fulfilled by helping others are more

likely to engage deeply in professional development, further supporting their intrinsic motivation.

### 2.3. Results from interview

The interviews revealed that lecturers at a private university in the Me Kong Delta are primarily motivated by a genuine passion for teaching and a desire to inspire their students, often linking this to their participation in professional development. This alignment between opportunities and personal interests enhances engagement.

While job security and financial rewards were noted as important extrinsic motivators, lecturers warned against overemphasizing these factors, as they can undermine intrinsic motivation and long-term success. Altruistic motivations also played a significant role, with many lecturers focused on student success and fostering a positive learning environment, which promotes collaboration among faculty.

Overall, the findings illustrate how intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations shape teaching practices. Schools should create a supportive environment that values these motivations to boost teacher engagement and effectiveness. Future research could explore the impact of these dynamics on teacher retention and student outcomes.

### 3. Discussion

The interrelation among intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations reveals a nuanced understanding of what drives teaching motivation among lecturers in the Mekong Delta. First, the unique cultural backdrop of the Mekong Delta influences how lecturers perceive and engage with professional development. Cultural attitudes towards education and professional growth play a significant role in shaping motivation. Second, administrative backing and a supportive institutional culture are critical for fostering an environment where lecturers feel encouraged to pursue professional development. The presence of strong leadership and collegial relationships enhances overall motivation and job satisfaction. Third, despite the identified motivations, barriers such as limited resources and time constraints were frequently mentioned by participants. Addressing these barriers is essential for maximizing the effectiveness of professional development initiatives. To sum up, the findings suggest that a holistic approach encompassing intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations can significantly enhance teachers' professional growth.

Institutions should strive to create professional development programs that recognize and nurture all three motivational types, thereby fostering a more engaged and satisfied teaching workforce.

### 4. Conclusion

The study reveals the complex correlations of intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivations shaping teaching practices among lecturers at a private university in the Mekong Delta. Intrinsic motivation, particularly a genuine passion for teaching, is crucial for engaging lecturers in professional development and fostering a supportive learning environment. While extrinsic factors like job security and financial incentives are important, overemphasis on these can undermine deeper intrinsic motivations. Altruistic desires to benefit students and foster collaboration among faculty also play a vital role. To enhance teaching motivation and effectiveness, educational institutions should adopt a holistic approach that integrates these motivational factors. This includes developing professional development programs aligned with lecturers' interests, providing meaningful recognition, and promoting a collaborative culture. By valuing and nurturing diverse motivations, institutions can improve job satisfaction, retention rates, and educational outcomes for students.

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