

Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes Towards Teaching Profession in Myanmar

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession in Myanmar. The sample was comprised of 146 (38.4%) male and 234 (61.6%) female pre-service teachers enrolled in BEd final year course. The Attitude Scale towards Teaching Profession was developed by the researcher for measuring the attitudes of pre-service teachers towards teaching profession as a data collection tool. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent sample *t*-test and one-way ANOVA. Results showed that there were no significant differences by subject streams and programs but significant differences were observed between male and female of pre-service teachers.

Keywords: Attitude, Teaching Profession, Pre-service Teachers

1. Introduction

Human resource is the main important factor to upgrade the quality of a nation. It is in the schools, colleges and universities where the human resources are mostly cultivated and brought up. It is teacher who moulds and shapes the resources in his hand. It means the fortune of the nation is in the hands of brilliant and competent teachers. Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of Myanmar stated that "education is a major contributor to the development of our social and economic capital. It inspires creativity and fosters innovation, it provides our youth with the necessary skills to enable them to compete in the modern labour market and it is a key driver of economic growth." Consequently, the role of teacher is of paramount importance because teachers are the main education imparters. Kennedy (1998) has pointed out that "outcomes of education are affected by the quality of the teaching workforce. Well-qualified and committed teachers will make the difference between success and failure for many students." For every effective teaching-learning process, both in-service and pre-service teachers are the most important factors. It is necessary not only to constantly update and refine the knowledge and skills of in-service teachers but also to well-equip pre-service teachers with positive attitude towards their profession.

2. Importance of the Study

There are five obligations to be practiced by a teacher in Myanmar society: to educate, to admonish students, to withhold nothing in teaching anything, to keep pupil safe and sound and to set the pupils in their respective proper place. The society has high expectation for teachers and teaching profession is considered more than simply to teach something. Punch & Tuetteman (1996) also pointed out that teaching professions is quite distinct from other professions and teachers are generally encumbered with many expectations from society. According to Bhave (2008), the teaching profession cannot be deliberated as only teach something. He stated that becoming a teacher does not mean that to stay away from all practices that help people succeed in life, to be able to learn new things, to be neglectful of all kinds of manual work and to live sink into the books. "Only to teach" means to be dead that detached from the life. Therefore, only possessing academic and pedagogic knowledge is not enough anymore to fulfil the expectations of the society and to meet the requirements of teaching profession.

From the psychological point of view, the teachers' attitude is one of the most influential factors in teaching profession. Evans (1965) stated that "Attitudes are playing a major role in human life as a motive for conduct in the various aspects of this life". This highlighted the importance of attitude in connection between individuals in a society where attitudes help the individual in social adjustment. Attitude can be regarded as the most significant indicator of success in the profession towards that one's attitude is developed. Without adoring his or her profession, one may not perform it productively (Terzi & Tezci, 2010).

University entrance system of Myanmar is only based on the students' matriculation examination marks from high school. Accordingly, a higher impression is on the university which accepts the candidates with high marks. Such universities are popular among the society and university of education is one of them. The entrance system is encouraging merely getting high marks and ignoring the attitudes towards teaching profession. Professor Dr. Mya Oo, secretary of education development committee of Myanmar stated that most of the students wanted to join popular university and joined the institutions to study particular subjects with the force of parents and societies without being much interested in those fields. As a result, human resources are not in the right place (Oo, 2013).

On the other hand, there are two different admission systems for B.Ed. pre-service teachers at university of education in Myanmar. The first one is BEd (Direct Intake) for those who passed the matriculation examination

which is not only nationwide examination but also the entrance examination for higher Institutions. This program only accepted the students with high marks in their matriculation examination. A second admission system is called BEd (Bridge Program). This program is for those who have completed two years course of pre-service teacher training at Education College. The matriculation examination passed marks of most students who joined Education College are lower than those of students who were accepted at university of education.

Moreover, Myanmar is now deeply concerned about the current or potential extensive shortage of teachers, particularly in certain subjects or in certain geographic population groups. At the same time, how to deploy qualified and experienced teachers in remote rural areas is a big challenge as well. The least qualified teachers are positioned in remote areas where the highest level is required, and this trend is strengthened by the current policy to recruit daily wage teachers to fill vacancies (NESP, 2017). The daily wage teachers are not certified teachers who will be offered a short teacher training course only after they are posted as teachers.

Therefore, it is needed to conduct the study to get deep understanding of prospective teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession in the content area. The reason for their career choice, professional commitment to teaching, perception on teaching career, professional expectation is needed to explore. In addition, a few studies have been done to explore the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession in Myanmar. The researcher hopes that the results from this study can help the policy maker of education as well as the universities of education to develop positive attitudes in pre-service teachers towards teaching profession.

3. Review of Literature

According to Allport (1935), attitude is "the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary social psychology". He defined an attitude as "a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related". Many social psychologists defined the term attitude in different ways. Aiken (1980) stated that "attitudes may be conceptualized as learned predispositions to respond positively or negatively to certain objects, situations, concepts, or persons. It consisted of cognitive (beliefs or knowledge), affective (emotional, motivational), and performance (behaviour or action tendencies) components". Eagly and Chaiken (2007) define an attitude as "a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favour or disfavour". This definition also included three important features of attitudes: evaluation, attitude object, and tendency. Fishbein and Ajzen (2010) also gave the similar definition of attitudes as "a latent disposition or tendency to respond with some degree of favourableness or unfavourableness to a psychological object".

Mathai (1992) stated that attitude towards teaching profession is an important predictor variable of success in teaching. Studies conducted by Rawat and Sreevastava (1984) found Significant difference between male and female teacher trainees' attitude towards teaching profession. Naik and Pathy (1997) found that female science teachers have more favourable attitude towards teaching than male counterparts. Ghosh and Bairagya (2010) in their study concluded that female secondary teachers possess more favourable attitudes towards teaching profession than male teachers. Benjamin et al. (2011) also supported this view that female student teachers had more positive attitude towards teaching profession than male student teachers. Rawat and Sreevastava (1984) conducted a comparative study of the attitude of male and female teacher trainees towards teaching. Significant difference was found between male and female teacher trainees in their attitude towards teaching profession. Mahapatra (1987) studied the comparative role of intelligence, attitude and vocational interest towards success in teaching. It was found that intelligence, attitude towards teaching and vocational interests are predictor variables of teaching success. Poozhikuth (1989) found that female teachers have high attitude towards teaching than male teachers but age is not significantly related with attitude towards teaching while length of service is connected with attitude towards teaching. Sharma & Dhaiya (2012) found that B.Ed. students' attitude towards teaching profession is not statistically significant between male and female as well as Arts and Science students but interestingly female B.Ed. students were found to have most positive towards teaching profession. Osunde & Izevbigie (2006) stated that teachers are not well paid financially and are discouraged because of the delay in paying wages and allowances, thus having a sense of loss of belonging. This situation has resulted in the low esteem and status of teachers and the teaching profession in society. Poor service conditions, wider negative influence and negative personal and professional behaviour of the teacher are main factors causing the low status of teachers.

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession in Myanmar.

4.1 Research Questions

1. What are the pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession?

2. Is there any significant difference in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession by gender?
3. Is there any significant difference between attitudes of final senior and junior pre-service teachers towards teaching profession?
4. Is there any significant difference in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession by subject stream?

4.2 Research Hypothesis

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession by gender.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between attitudes of final senior and junior pre-service teachers towards teaching profession.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession by subject stream.

5. Methodology

5.1 Participants

Study group of the research consists of 380 (Female = 234, Male = 146) pre-service teachers enrolled at the BEd final year course at one of universities of education in Myanmar during 2016-2017 academic year. The participants of all final year BEd students who were going to be deployed as senior teacher in public high schools were purposefully selected for this study.

5.2 Instrumentation

The instrument used for data collection contained two sections; section A and B. Section A of the questionnaire was to obtain demographic information of pre-service teachers: gender, age, program and subject stream. Section B contained 30 items to measure the pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession which was developed by the researcher.

While developing the items, the researcher conducted a thorough literature review on attitude and collected and framed some designed or adapted scales (Tezci, & Terzi, 2010, Hussain, 2004). Moreover, with assistance of a lecturer from the University of Education, some volunteered pre-service teachers were asked to write down their feelings and thoughts about teaching profession. These texts were analysed and formed items, including both positive and negative statements. All items were written in Myanmar language so that the participants could easily and clearly understand the questionnaires. The first draft of the attitude scales was then given to four experts in the field for analysing the context as well as for editing the statements. As suggested by the experts, some items which are assumed irrelevant were excluded and a few items were modified. Again, to investigate the validity of the questionnaires, 20 pre-service teachers were reviewed for pilot study. These participants were similar to those of actual sample and excluded in the main study.

The finalized attitude scale is a 30 item Likert instrument including five subscales. The five subscales investigating pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession are career choice, attitudinal development, professional commitment, professional pride and professional expectation. There are 6 items in each subscale. There were 14 negative and 16 positive statements in the scale. The reliability of the scale tested by the inter-item correlation method (α) was 0.86, which is good for reliability of a questionnaire (Field, 2009).

5.3 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The researcher distributed the questionnaires to all the participants during their class hour with the assist of a lecturer. The participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and return same to the researcher on the spot. In this way, the researcher could manage to eliminate unnecessary influence on the participants and collected the questionnaires with a 100% return rate. The collected data were imported into SPSS Statistical software (version 23) and analysed descriptive statistics, including mean, standard deviation, etc. Each item is scored 1-5 on a five-point Likert scale (5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= undecided, 2= disagree, and 1= strongly disagree). Fourteen negative items are reversely scored by the researcher before tallying. The mean score for each subscale and over all mean score of the total five subscales were also calculated. The items were arranged in the descending order of the mean scores value in the table. For the study, below the mean score of 3.0 will be negative attitude, neutral at 3.0, slightly positive from 3.1 to 3.5, moderately positive from 3.6 to 4.5 and highly positive above 4.6. Independent sample t-test was applied to test the hypothesis of no difference by gender and program. In order to find out whether there is significant difference in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession by subject stream, One-way ANOVA was conducted.

6. Results and Discussion

The demographic information of the participants is presented in Table 1. It comprises 146 (38.4%) male and 234 (61.6%) female pre-service teachers. The age of participants is ranged from 20 to 25 and about 95% are between the ages of 20 to 23. 192 (50.5%) BEd final senior pre-service teachers from bridge program who had joined university of education after completing two-year teacher training course at Education College took part in the study. The rest 188 (49.5%) BEd final junior pre-service teachers are from BEd direct intake program. All BEd pre-service teachers have to take one of three subjects; Myanmar, English and Mathematics and two extra subjects taken option from Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Geography, History and Economics. Participants were grouped into three subject streams; Myanmar, English and Mathematics in this study. As shown in the Table, 19 (5%) for Myanmar, 123 (32.4%) for English and 212 (55.8%) for Mathematics participated in the study. However, 26 (6.8%) participants did not identify their subject stream.

Table 1: Demographic Information of Participants

Gender	Male	146 (38.4%)
	Female	234 (61.6%)
	Total	380 (100%)
Age	20-21	169 (44.5%)
	22-23	193 (50.8%)
	24-25	18 (4.7%)
	Total	380 (100%)
Program	Final Junior	188 (49.5%)
	Final Senior	192 (50.5%)
	Total	380 (100%)
Subject Stream	Myanmar	19 (5%)
	English	123 (32.4%)
	Mathematics	212 (55.8%)
	No Response	26 (6.8%)
	Total	380 (100%)

As shown in Table 2, the value of all items other than that of item 6 is positive. Most of the participants have entered into teaching not because they had little options to choose but because they love children and teaching. In addition, they chose teaching profession not because it was easily available and popular. They might be also free from the influence of relatives and friends to choose teaching as their career. However, they might not have thought to be a teacher in their childhood as the value of item 6 shows negative attitude of the pre-service teachers.

Table 2: Career Choice

Item		Mean	SD
26	*I had to choose teaching as my career because I had low marks in matriculation examination.	4.11	1.04
21	I chose teaching profession because I love children and teaching them makes me feel pleased.	3.72	0.99
16	*I chose teaching as my career because it is easily available.	3.69	1.13
11	*I chose teaching as my career because it is popular among professions.	3.66	1.06
1	*I chose teaching profession owing to compulsion of my relatives or persuasion of my friends.	3.08	1.34
6	I made a firm decision to be a teacher since my childhood.	2.76	1.23

* Negative items are marked with (*)

According to Table 3, the value of all items ranges from 3.6 to 4.24 which indicate pre-service teachers' attitude is moderately positive. Most of pre-service teachers trust that their courses are interesting and enjoyable. The idea of becoming teacher also makes them pleased. Accordingly, they believe that the knowledge and skills which they learnt through the training will help them when they become teachers. Moreover, teacher educators' supervision and practicum make them get fond of teaching profession.

Table 3: Attitudinal Development

Item		Mean	SD
2	When I become a teacher, I will apply professional teaching knowledge and skill gained through the teacher training courses.	4.27	0.60
17	It makes me happy to think that I will become a school teacher.	4.11	0.73
27	*I don't think I will be able to apply pedagogic and academic knowledge I gained from teacher training courses.	4.03	0.83
22	*I neither like nor interested in the teacher training courses offered.	3.76	0.97
7	I became fond of teaching profession after micro-teaching or practicum.	3.67	1.12
12	I got fond of teaching because of teacher educators' guidance and instruction.	3.60	1.09

* Negative items are marked with (*)

Pre-service teachers' professional commitments to teaching are shown in Table 4. The value of all items except that of item 28 is positive. Although most pre-service teachers' attitude is favourable regarding professional obligation, they may prefer to work in their native place. The possible reason is that they may feel worried to face social difficulties such as transportation, communication with family, accommodation, etc. in the remote areas far away from their home.

Table 4: Professional Commitment

Item		Mean	SD
3	I will try to be an honest and outstanding teacher when I become a teacher.	4.54	0.60
13	When I become a teacher, I'll try not only to improve my students' academic achievement but also to enhance their lives.	4.39	0.63
18	I would like to keep working as a teacher even under any difficult conditions.	3.97	0.86
23	*I will look for a highly remunerative job if teaching career does not satisfy me.	3.83	0.84
8	I will try to improve the education of underdeveloped areas especially bordered and remote areas when I become a teacher.	3.53	1.08
28	*I would like to work in my native place when I become a teacher.	2.81	1.28

* Negative items are marked with (*)

Table 5 depicts that the value of all items is positive. Most of the participants feel proud to be teacher and accept teaching as noble and prestige profession. They also do not regret for entering into teaching profession and may recommend that teaching is suitable job to choose.

Table 5: Professional Pride

Item		Mean	SD
19	*I feel shy to identify myself as a teacher among my friends and colleagues.	4.40	0.94
24	Teaching is a noble job.	4.36	0.65
9	Teaching is a prestige job.	4.29	0.68
29	*I regret having chosen the teaching profession.	4.23	0.88
4	*Teaching is a boring job.	4.07	1.02
14	*I would not recommend anyone to choose teaching profession as his/her career.	3.29	1.10

* Negative items are marked with (*)

According to table 6, the value of all items is positive. Most of pre-service teachers believe that they will be treated respectfully by the society. They also trust that they will enjoy satisfaction from teaching despite low-paid job. They also believe teaching has job security that can guarantee future life and it will bring a chance to supply the wellbeing of the society. Besides, they hope to develop personality and character through teaching.

Table 6: Professional Expectation

Item		Mean	SD
15	I believe that teaching profession will bring me a venerable position in society.	4.15	0.68
30	I believe that working as a teacher can guarantee my future life.	4.08	0.83
10	Teaching profession will develop my personality and character.	3.94	0.90
20	*I don't think I will derive satisfaction from teaching.	3.83	0.90
25	*Low rates of remuneration for teacher will make me remain financially depressed.	3.82	1.08
5	Teaching will create an opportunity for me to contribute the welfare of society.	3.75	1.07

* Negative items are marked with (*)

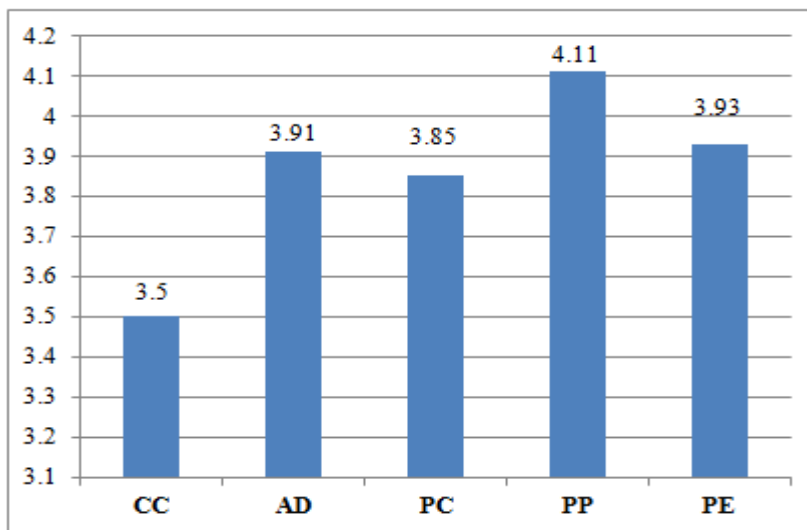
Table 7 reveals the mean score for attitude of the pre-service teachers towards the profession to be 3.86 out of a total score of 5. The minimum mean score rated by the prospective teachers is 2 and the maximum is 5. Based on the descriptive analysis, it can be concluded that, the pre-service teachers' attitude towards the

profession is moderately positive.

Table 7: Pre-service Teachers' Attitude towards Teaching Profession

	N	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum
Attitude	380	3.86	.41	2	5

As shown in Figure 1, the mean scores of 3.5 for "Career Choice", 3.91 for "Attitudinal Development", 3.85 for "Professional Commitment", 4.11 for "Professional Pride" and 3.93 for "Professional Expectation" indicated that pre-service teachers' attitude was positive in all subscales. While comparing all subscales, the mean scores for "Professional Pride" were found to be the highest and "Career Choice" the lowest.



Note: CC = Career Choice
 AD = Attitudinal Development
 PC = Professional Commitment
 PP = Professional Pride
 PE = Professional Expectation

Figure 1. Mean Scores of Pre-service Teachers' Attitudes towards Teaching Profession

When analysing all the subscales of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession by calculating independent sample *t*-test, out of five subscales of pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession, three subscales (AD, PP and PE) were statistically significant between male and female. However, there was no gender difference on two subscales (CC and PC) (See: Table 8).

Table 8: Gender Difference on Pre-service Teachers' Attitude towards Teaching Profession

	Mean		SD		t	df	p
	Male	Female	Male	Female			
CC	20.62	21.27	3.84	3.48	-1.691	378	.092
AD	22.49	24.03	3.21	2.96	-4.769	378	.000
PC	22.81	23.24	3.33	2.75	-1.325	265.219	.186
PP	23.45	25.38	3.68	2.88	-5.422	254.240	.000
PE	22.77	24.06	3.92	3.26	-3.341	265.749	.001

Note: CC = Career Choice
 AD = Attitudinal Development
 PC = Professional Commitment
 PP = Professional Pride
 PE = Professional Expectation

The findings $t(378) = -4.769, p=0.000$, indicated that there was a significant difference in "Attitudinal Development" (AD) between male ($M = 22.49, SD = 3.21$) and female ($M = 24.03, SD = 2.96$). As regard "Professional Pride" (PP), the findings $t(254.240) = -5.422, p=0.000$, showed that there was a significant difference between male ($M = 23.45, SD = 3.68$) and female ($M = 25.38, SD = 2.88$). Again, the findings for "Expectation regarding Teaching Profession" (PE) $t(265.749) = -3.341, p=0.001$, also showed that there was a significant difference between male ($M = 22.77, SD = 3.92$) and female ($M = 24.06, SD = 3.26$).

To test hypothesis 1, independent sample *t*-test was run for pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession (overall) (See: Table 9). The test was significant, $t(244.864) = -4.340, p=0.000$, showing that attitude of female pre-service teachers towards teaching profession ($M = 117.97, SD = 10.453$) was more favourable than that of male pre-service teachers towards teaching profession ($M = 112.13, SD = 3.26$). Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in attitude towards teaching profession by gender is rejected.

Table 9: Gender Difference on Pre-service Teachers' Attitude towards Teaching Profession (Overall)

	Mean		SD		t	df	p
	Male	Female	Male	Female			
Attitude	112.13	117.97	14.01	10.46	-4.340	244.864	.000

An independent sample *t*-test was conducted to evaluate the hypothesis that there is no significant difference between attitudes of final senior and junior pre-service teachers towards teaching profession. As shown in Table 10, the mean value of final junior pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession ($M = 116.97$, $SD = 11.426$) was greater than that of final senior pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession ($M = 114.68$, $SD = 11.426$). However, this difference was not significant $t(378) = 1.681$, $p > .05$. Therefore, the hypothesis is accepted.

Table 10: Final Senior and Junior Pre-service Teachers' Attitude towards Teaching Profession by Program

	N	Mean	SD	t	df	p
Final Senior	192	114.68	11.426	1.681	378	.094
Final Junior	188	116.79	11.426			

As shown in Table 11, it was found that there was no statistically significant among the three subject streams on pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession, $F(2, 351) = .283$, $p = .754$. Therefore, the hypothesis that there is no significant difference in pre-service teachers' attitudes towards teaching profession by subject stream is accepted.

Table 11: ANOVA Results for Pre-service Teachers' Attitude towards Teaching Profession by Subject Stream

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	85.423	2	42.712	.283	.754
Within Groups	53004.433	351	151.010		
Total	53089.856	353			

7. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study attempted to observe pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession in Myanmar using the Attitude Scale towards Teaching Profession. All final year B.Ed. students who were going to be deployed as senior teacher in public secondary school were selected as sample group for the study. As shown in table 1, the gender profile of the participants indicates that approximately two-third (61.6%) of pre-service teachers are female. According to the report of Comprehensive Education Sector Review (CESR), over 80% of teachers in the state sector were female (CESR 2013). Teaching in Myanmar is a highly gendered profession. About 95% of the participants were at age ranging from 20 to 23. This means that the schooling of almost all students proceeded uninterrupted up to that point because a student in Myanmar normally entered a university at age 16 or 17. Regarding career choice, most of the pre-service teachers entered into teaching profession because they love teaching and children. The force of parents and societies did not impact on their career choice but most did not agree with the statement "I made a firm decision to be a teacher since my childhood". This finding does not support Professor Dr. Mya Oo's point of view that most of the students in Myanmar wanted to attend popular university (Oo, 2013). However, this study cannot be generalized to all students in Myanmar because it was a small-scale survey. During the training period, most of pre-service teachers found their courses interesting and enjoyable. They also believed the pedagogic and academic knowledge they received will become beneficial to teaching profession. Not only their teacher educators' guidance and instruction but also practicums made them get found of teaching profession. The finding revealed that pre-service teachers' attitudinal development during training period was favourable. Moreover, most pre-service teachers' attitude was favourable regarding professional commitment but they might prefer to work in their native place as most of pre-service teachers qualified to join University of Education were not from remote areas. This is a big concern for policy maker of education in Myanmar because most teachers do not want to work in remote areas which are far from their native place. As a result, schools in rural areas confronted with a high shortage of teachers. Although the current policy is trying to recruit daily wage teachers in order to fill vacancies, the quality of education in remote areas remains some concerns and a major challenge. With regard to professional pride, most of pre-service teachers felt proud to be teacher as teaching profession was considered to be noble and esteemed for them. Additionally, their professional expectation was found to favourable as the mean score 3.93 for the last sub-scale as shown in figure 1 was found to be the second highest one among all sub-scales. Interestingly, the mean score 3.5 for career choice was the lowest among all sub-scales. A mixed method should be conducted to explore the reason for

career choices of pre-service teachers. When analysing the data, statistically significance was found between male and female. This finding is in accordance with other studies conducted by Naik and Pathy (1997), Bairagya (2010), Benjamin et al. (2011) and Poozhikuth (1989). However, there were no significant differences by programs and subject streams. The findings and results of this study indicates that pre-service teachers' attitude towards teaching profession was positive. A similar study should be carried out in other institutions of education in Myanmar in order to investigate the attitude of pre-service teachers towards teaching profession.

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