

Research Paper

Embarking on a Teaching Career: Experience of Beginner Teachers in Laamu Atoll, Maldives

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Abstract: Embarking on a teaching career involves significant adjustments as beginner teachers undergo a transition period marked by a shift from guided practice and mentorship to independent teaching responsibilities. Beginner teachers face a lot of challenges during this transition period. This study utilised a cross-sectional quantitative survey methodology to investigate the experiences of novice teachers within schools across Laamu Atoll, Maldives. A total of 56 beginner teachers from Laamu Atoll participated in this research. Data was collected through an online questionnaire comprising both open and closed-ended questions. The findings of this study indicate that first-year teachers commonly encounter stress, lack adequate support, and develop feelings of unpreparedness in addressing both behavioural and academic challenges among their students. This study suggests the implementation of mentoring programs as pairing new educators with experienced counterparts significantly aids novice teachers in navigating and addressing their apprehensions during their inaugural year in the classroom.

Keywords: Beginner teachers, challenges, classroom management, Maldives

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Introduction

The transition from student teachers to beginner teachers is marked by a shift from guided practice and mentorship to independent full teaching responsibilities and classroom management. Novice teachers face challenges such as workload burdens and anxiety, echoing experiences globally (Conte, 2022). Defined as recent graduates or newcomers, beginner teachers encounter diverse experiences, from transformative learning to significant hurdles threatening job stability (Alam, 2018). Factors contributing to their challenges include unsupportive attitudes from leaders, disruptive student behaviour, poor working conditions, and lack of support from principals, leading to high attrition rates within the first few years (Ahmed et al., 2020; Lacireno-Paquet et al., 2012). Despite the global prevalence of these issues, research on attrition rates among novice teachers in the Maldives remains scarce. This study aims to address this gap by examining the experiences of beginner teachers in Laamu Atoll, Maldives, providing valuable insights for policymakers and administrators to support new educators.

Laamu Atoll, also known as Haddunmathi, stands as one of the most developed atolls in the Maldives, boasting 13 inhabited islands and a population of 16,805 individuals as of 2019 (Maldives Bureau of Statistics, 2019). Within its educational landscape, there were 3,474 students enrolled in Laamu Atoll schools in the same year, served by 401 trained teachers and 57 untrained teachers, establishing a student-teacher ratio of 8:1 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). However, despite these figures, there persists a notable teacher shortage issue, affecting the quality of education delivery in the region (Garcia & Weiss, 2019). The Maldives National University (MNU), a leading institution in the country, annually produces over 3,000 teachers, contributing significantly to the local teaching workforce (The Maldives National University, 2021). Nevertheless, the demand for educators continues to rise annually, with 313 teachers graduating from MNU in 2020 alone, highlighting the increasing interest in teaching as a profession among Maldivian youth (The Maldives National University, 2021; Thompson, 2007).

Despite the influx of new educators, first-year teachers face unique challenges in adapting to the profession, characterised by self-doubt and the need for support and guidance (Herman, 2015). While they bring fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the table, they often encounter difficulties in implementing these ideas within the constraints of the education system, particularly in atoll schools where resources are limited (Johnson, 2018). Disparities in educational quality between atoll schools and those in the capital city of Male' are evident, with the former lacking essential facilities such as computer labs, libraries, and science laboratories, contributing to lower pass rates among students (United Nations Children's Fund [UNICEF], 2020). Moreover, the geographical disparity in educational performance underscores the need for a deeper understanding of the experiences of beginner teachers in atoll

schools and the provision of targeted support to address their needs (UNICEF, 2020). Efforts to alleviate these challenges must involve comprehensive research and strategic interventions aimed at bolstering the support systems available to first-year teachers, thereby enhancing the overall quality of education in atoll communities (UNICEF, 2020).

The purpose of this study is to investigate the experiences of first-year teachers in Laamu atoll. This includes their satisfaction level with their job performance, feedback mechanisms provided to them and the challenges they faced. The research was guided by three specific questions:

1. How do beginner teachers perceive their first-year teaching experience?
2. What is the feedback provided to beginner teachers and to what extent does the feedback help beginner teachers in their teaching job?
3. What are the challenges beginner teachers face during their first year of teaching and the proposed solutions to address those challenges?

The study explores crucial insights concerning novice teachers, particularly focusing on Laamu atoll schools in the Maldives. Notably, a significant demand for local teachers is identified, with 25% of teaching positions occupied by expatriates as of 2019 (National Bureau of Statistics, 2020). Existing literature highlights the growing concern surrounding the early departure of beginner teachers from the profession, often attributed to factors such as excessive paperwork and insufficient time for actual teaching (Created Publishing, 2021). Furthermore, inadequate support from school administrations, characterised by poor preparation and lack of assistance, contributes to the challenging working environment for first-year teachers (Mulvahill, 2019b).

Literature Review

Challenges Encountered by First-Year Teachers

Kozikoglu (2018) defined first-year teachers as those with limited experience, while Sözen (2018) categorised them as freshly hired teachers with up to two years of experience. Novice teachers, typically with five or fewer years of experience, undergo various phases during their initial years, including anticipation, survival, disillusionment, rejuvenation, and reflection (Mokoena, 2023). Despite entering the educational profession with high aspirations, new teachers often encounter significant difficulties in adapting to the school environment and managing classrooms (Ahmed et al., 2020). Romano and Gibson (2006) suggested that novice teachers may face greater stress and dissatisfaction compared to experienced counterparts, impacting their classroom performance. In another study, Rees (2015) highlighted both the successes and challenges novices encounter in implementing Developmentally Appropriate Practices (DAP) in classrooms, indicating a need for further support

during teacher preparation programs. Rees (2015) also discussed the evolving educational landscapes and strategies to better equip preservice teachers. Further, Charleston-Cormier (2010) as well as Fantilli and McDougall (2009) outlined specific challenges faced by beginner teachers, including student motivation, classroom management, and resource limitations.

Barnum (2019) underscored the difficulties faced by new teachers, including placement in classrooms with struggling students and insufficient support from experienced colleagues. Disruptive student behaviour further complicates the teaching environment. Despite these challenges, many new teachers remain in the profession due to their dedication to students (Confait, 2015). However, a significant proportion contemplate leaving, particularly during the early months of their careers (Turner, 2015). Financial constraints may prevent some from leaving, despite considering resignation (Loewus, 2021). Recognising the importance of supporting novice teachers, efforts are needed to identify their needs and provide appropriate assistance to foster their retention and success in the teaching profession (Ahmed, 2020; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2012).

Numerous studies attest to the rollercoaster journey experienced by teachers during their initial year of teaching. Dias-Lacy and Guirguis (2017) contended that student teachers often lack opportunities to directly observe or engage with discipline and curriculum issues. Similarly, many educators expressed their concerns regarding the insufficient training provided to first-year teachers (Mader, 2016a). First-hand exposure to real classroom scenarios could significantly enhance the experiences of new teachers (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017; Mader, 2016b).

Fletcher (2013) also underscored the challenges faced by first-year teachers in reconciling theoretical knowledge acquired during their teacher training programs with practical classroom methodologies due to their limited professional experience. To alleviate many of the challenges encountered by first-year teachers, Ali (2013) attributed them primarily to the inadequate teaching practice in preservice programs. Participants in Ali's study highlighted the difficulties faced in implementing strategies learned during their teacher training due to the unpredictability of classroom dynamics (2013). Similarly, Tijerina and Sánchez (2006) emphasised the role of teacher education institutes in addressing the difficulties faced by novice teachers through programmatic reflections.

Furthermore, Ali (2013) discovered that secondary first-year teachers in the Maldives spend significant extracurricular time preparing lessons and grading students. Bailey (2015) found that when left to plan lessons independently, first-year teachers exhibit a range of reactions from creativity to confusion and anxiety. Conversely, experienced teachers engage in a more nuanced and simultaneous evaluation of various aspects during lesson planning (Bailey, 2015).

Strategies for Mitigating Challenges Faced by Beginner Teachers

Addressing the challenges faced by first-year teachers requires comprehensive support mechanisms, including enhanced teacher training programs, improved school infrastructure, and greater collaboration among stakeholders. These interventions are crucial for retaining talented educators and ensuring optimal learning outcomes for students. Charleston-Cormier (2010) elucidated that numerous fledgling teachers necessitate assistance in fostering self-motivation, structuring courses to cater to individual student needs, and devising captivating instructional strategies. Moreover, it has been underscored that provisioning support and mentorship services constitutes a pivotal function of school administration for neophyte educators (Ali, 2013).

Given their limited teaching experience, it is strongly advocated that school management extend comprehensive support to novice educators across all facets of their professional endeavours. As a school leader, the establishment of a conducive and affirming environment for inaugural-year educators assumes paramount importance (Mulvahill, 2019a). Furthermore, scholarly discourse posits that the frequency of soliciting, receiving, and acting upon feedback correlates positively with expeditious professional growth and pedagogical efficacy (Landis, 2024). Additionally, first-year educators exhibit a predilection for positive feedback from parents akin to student engagement in pedagogical activities and endorsement from peer educators and administrative personnel. Fitzpatrick's (2016) qualitative inquiry, derived from first-hand teacher experiences, accentuated the instrumental role of coaching and immersive classroom exposure in cultivating efficacy among urban educators.

Several empirical investigations underscore the pivotal role of teacher-student interactions in fostering enhanced academic performance (Mazer et al., 2009). Moreover, empirical evidence posits that nurturing positive parent-teacher relationships serves as a motivational impetus for persevering through the arduous initial years of pedagogical practice (Ali, 2013). To facilitate a productive inaugural year in the teaching profession, the cultivation of self-esteem assumes paramount significance (Pierce & Gardner, 2004). Scholars posit that individuals construct their professional self-concept through organisational experiences, thereby delineating their self-esteem trajectory.

Considering Maslow's self-esteem theory, comprehensive endeavours to bolster the self-esteem and confidence of novice educators are imperative (Interaction Design Foundation, 2021). Maslow's conceptualisation underscores that deficiencies in essential needs prompt motivational endeavours to fulfil them (Perera, n.d.). Moreover, Maslow contends that self-esteem denotes the degree of self-respect accorded by oneself and others (Perera, n.d.). High self-esteem manifests in successful life adaptation, emotional resilience, self-regulation, constructive response to criticism, and adept stress management (Aðalsteinsson et al., 2014). Furthermore, educators exhibiting robust instructional efficacy devote greater instructional time to

learning tasks, extend additional support to struggling students, and evince proactive problem-solving tendencies (Aðalsteinsson et al., 2014).

Mentoring initiatives between novice and seasoned educators have emerged as salient mechanisms not only for acclimatising novices to the rigors of pedagogical practice, but also for assuaging apprehensions during the formative stages of their career trajectory (Dias-Lacy & Guirguis, 2017). Additionally, observational engagement with experienced educators augments novices' pedagogical repertoire, mitigates stressors, and fosters adaptive coping mechanisms (Salehi & Farajnezhad, 2020). Complementary research by Smith and Ingersoll (2004) underscored the efficacy of mentoring interventions in ameliorating the challenges encountered by novice educators. The provision of mentorship, collaborative planning sessions, and workload alleviation measures emerge as instrumental in curbing attrition rates among novice educators (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

Administrative stewardship in enforcing regulatory frameworks and fostering conducive learning environments assumes primacy within the educational ecosystem (Amanchukwu et al., 2015; Wahab et al., 2014). School leaders are entrusted with disciplinarian responsibilities and are tasked with cultivating an affirming milieu conducive to the professional development of novice educators and academic flourishing of students (Mbon, 2017).

Assessment is an important part of learning (Rahman & Lee, 2022). To obviate parental inquiries regarding instructional methodologies and assessment modalities of novice educators, Ali (2013) underscored the efficacy of organising parent-teacher conferences at the commencement of the academic year. Moreover, Lew and Nelson (2016) accentuated the pivotal role of fostering robust teacher-student rapport in mitigating behavioural aberrations among students. Furthermore, novice educators in the Maldives advocate for curricular enhancements to accommodate diverse student needs and endorse administrative interventions to facilitate streamlined pedagogical undertakings (Ali, 2013). Additionally, first-year educators advocate for proactive administrative oversight and instructional support mechanisms to streamline pedagogical endeavours (Ali, 2013).

Among the remedial strategies proffered by novice educators, the establishment of robust support mechanisms, such as mentoring and induction programs, emerges as paramount (Ali, 2013). Furthermore, the integration of Learning Management Systems is heralded as efficacious in alleviating workload burdens, fostering critical thinking, and enhancing pedagogical efficacy (Mwendwa, 2017). Ahmed (2020) advocated for sustained professional development initiatives aimed at enhancing novice educators' proficiency in leveraging modern instructional technologies. Moreover, the professional shortcomings of novice educators underscore the imperative of targeted interventions to bolster their pedagogical acumen (Ahmed, 2020). To mitigate student behavioural issues, Denhof (2016) recommended

strategic planning and contingency preparation. Drawing from personal teaching experiences, Denhof (2016) underscored the necessity of pre-emptive planning and resource provisioning to cater to the diverse needs of students.

Methodology

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive cross-sectional quantitative survey approach, which was appropriate due to its capacity to systematically characterise a phenomenon (Vaxco, n.d.). Closed-ended questions were predominantly utilised to ensure respondents' answers were concise, as they were presented with a predefined set of options in the questionnaire. Through the quantitative research method, this study facilitated the exploration and formulation of predictions, the establishment of empirical evidence, and the examination of previously posited issues encountered by novice educators in Male schools, thereby validating or refuting pre-existing hypotheses. Furthermore, Dehalwar and Sharma (2024) asserted that quantitative methods offer the advantage of minimising bias in research endeavours. Thus, the utilisation of a quantitative approach enabled the attainment of the study's objectives.

Population and Sampling

There are 13 schools within the Laamu Atoll. The target population for this study consisted of 60 novice teachers meeting the inclusion criteria of possessing 1–2 years of teaching experience. Due to the relatively small size of the target population, a whole population sampling approach was employed, encompassing all 60 eligible teachers who were invited to participate in the study. Ultimately, 56 teachers (comprising 32 females and 24 males) took part in the research.

Data Collection and Data Analysis

The study employed a questionnaire-based survey to gather quantitative data, focusing on 56 novice teachers from 13 schools within the Laamu atoll. An internet-based platform ensured anonymity, with each participant receiving a unique access key. Maintaining openness to unforeseen patterns and results was integral to the research approach (Bhat, n. d.). The survey was conducted in January 2020.

Descriptive statistics were applied to each survey question, categorising responses and computing mean scores and frequency distributions. Subsequently, a univariate ANOVA analysis was conducted to discern potential variations in teacher experiences across different islands within Laamu. As suggested by Timpany (n.d.), a t-test was utilised to determine significant differences between two distinct groups, such as male and female teachers.

Ethics approval was obtained from Zikura International College and the Ministry of Education, given the involvement of government personnel. Key ethical principles, particularly informed consent, were rigorously upheld. Participants were fully informed of their rights and provided with a consent form prior to engaging in the questionnaire. Personal data, including age and qualifications, were securely coded and stored. Participants were assured of confidentiality, with only essential information collected. Participants retained the right to withhold information and were not coerced into providing specific responses. Their voluntary participation was emphasised, and they were free to abstain from completing the questionnaire if they objected. Information sheets and consent forms were provided, detailing the study's objectives and data handling procedures. Anonymity was maintained throughout, with responses accessible solely to the researcher. The online survey data was utilised exclusively for the purposes of this study.

Instrument: Validity and Reliability

The research methodology employed in this study draws upon an adapted questionnaire derived from the TALIS 2013 instrument, as outlined by Rutkowski et al. (2013). The questionnaire was selected due to its comprehensive coverage of various antecedents, school climate dimensions, procedures, and outcomes pertinent to the investigation. Questionnaire was chosen as the primary data collection tool owing to its reliability and efficiency in gathering insights from a large pool of participants within a constrained timeframe, aligning with prior research findings emphasising its utility (Rodrigo, 2015). Structurally, the questionnaire was organised into four distinct sections, each addressing different facets of the research inquiry.

The first section focused on gathering participants' personal information, encompassing demographic details such as gender and educational qualifications. Subsequent sections delved into the participants' experiences within the school environment, evaluating aspects such as the provision of guidance and support for first-year educators, the overall school climate, and job satisfaction. Likert scale questions, acknowledged for their widespread application in gauging perceptions and attitudes across various social contexts (Jovancic, 2023), were predominantly employed in sections two and three to capture nuanced insights. Additionally, an open-ended question was strategically incorporated to solicit participants' perspectives on the challenges encountered by novice teachers and potential solutions, leveraging the inherent advantages of such questions in eliciting subjective viewpoints and facilitating a deeper understanding of complex issues (Wolff, 2021). Consequently, this approach not only enabled a comprehensive examination of the research objectives, but also facilitated the exploration of nuanced experiences and

perspectives relevant to the study's focus on the challenges faced by beginner teachers during their initial tenure.

The chosen questionnaire, adapted from the TALIS 2013 instrument, was selected with the presumption of established validity and reliability, as previously tested and affirmed in prior research (Rutkowski et al., 2013). This assumption underpins the confidence in the questionnaire's ability to effectively capture the intended constructs and phenomena pertinent to the study's objectives. The decision to utilise a pre-existing instrument with established psychometric properties aligns with established best practices in survey research, ensuring the robustness and credibility of the data collected (Maric et al., 2023). Thus, the questionnaire's incorporation into the research design not only facilitated the efficient collection of data, but also instilled confidence in the validity and reliability of the findings derived from its utilisation.

Research Findings

Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

A total of 56 beginner teachers participated in this study, with their demographics summarised in Table 1. The gender composition of the respondents was 57% female and 43% male. Half of the participants in this study belonged to the age group 20 to 25, while another half were 26 years or older. Regarding the educational background of the respondents, 61% of teachers have completed bachelor's degrees, 25% have master's degrees, and 14% have advanced certificates in teaching.

Table 1. Profile of respondents

Demographic Variables		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	32	57
	Male	24	43
Age	20–25 years	28	50
	26–30 years	14	25
	Above 30 years	14	25
Highest educational qualification	Advanced certificate in teaching	7	14
	Bachelor's degree	33	61
	Master's degree	13	25

Beginner Teachers' Perceptions of Their First-Year Experience

The beginner teacher's perceptions of their first-year experience are discussed from the following aspects: career re-evaluation, additional support received and perceptions towards school placement.

Satisfaction with Teaching Career

Participants were queried regarding their hypothetical reconsideration of their career choice, specifically whether they would opt to pursue teaching again if given the chance. As depicted in Figure 2, a noteworthy proportion of respondents expressed affirmation towards remaining in the teaching profession. Precisely, 33% (18 respondents) strongly concurred, while 44% (24 respondents) concurred with the notion of reselecting teaching as their career path. Conversely, a minority, comprising 16.7% (9 respondents), voiced disagreement, with an additional 5.6% (3 respondents) strongly opposing this perspective.

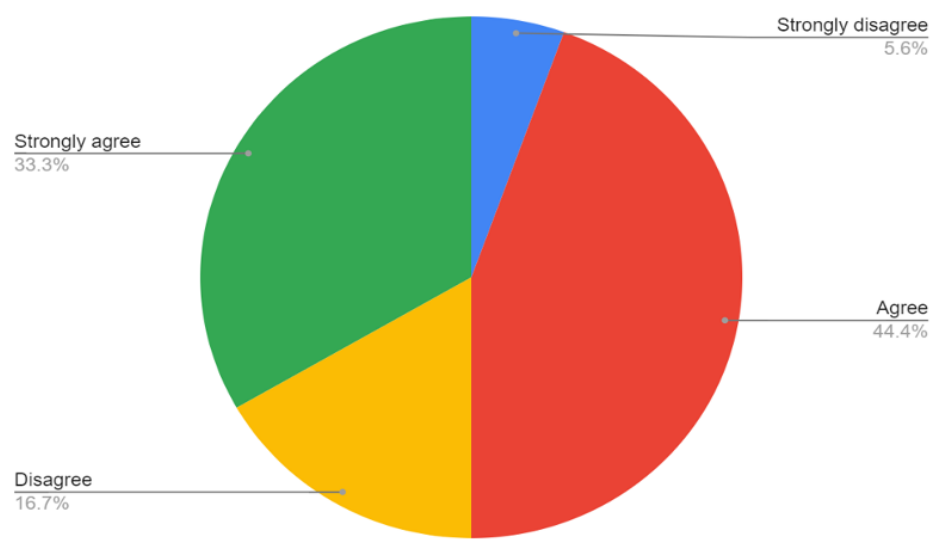


Figure 1. Career re-evaluation

It is apparent that the participants within this study exhibited contentment with their current vocation as educators. This sentiment aligns with findings from a study conducted by the National Education Association, which revealed an increased departure rate or early retirement among teachers after the COVID-19 outbreak (Kamenetz, 2022). The participants were questioned regarding their sentiments on their career choice as teachers, with Figure 2 presenting the corresponding outcomes. Among the 56 respondents, 54 provided responses to this inquiry. Notably, 13 respondents (24%) and 18 respondents (33%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement, respectively, with regard to regretting their decision to become teachers. Conversely, 18 respondents (33%) from the sampled cohort concurred with the sentiment of regretting their career choice.

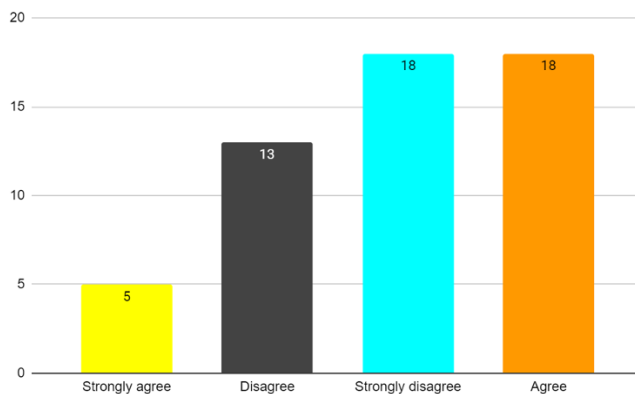


Figure 2. Career choice as teachers

Upon holistic examination, Figure 2 elucidates that 43% of novice teachers harbour regret regarding their profession, while 57% exhibit contentment with their career trajectory in teaching. A study conducted in the United States by Richmond (2012) underscored pertinent factors contributing to teacher dissatisfaction. Specifically, Richmond (2012) revealed a correlation between discontentment and amplified class sizes, district-wide layoffs, increased prevalence of undernourished students, and heightened demand for essential social services among families within their purview.

Provision of Additional Support to Beginner Teachers

Participants were queried regarding whether the school offered additional assistance in instances where a teacher required it. The findings are presented in Figure 3.

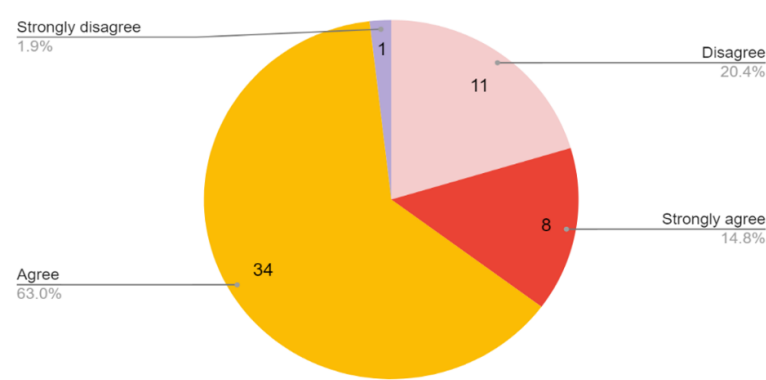


Figure 3. Provision of additional assistance

Thirty-four respondents (63.0%) agreed, and eight respondents (14.8%) strongly agreed that the school provides extra support and guidance when needed. Conversely, 12 participants disagreed with this statement, indicating a lack of support and guidance from the school.

Perception towards School Placement

An inquiry was posited to discern the level of satisfaction among these nascent educators concerning their current school milieu, with Figure 4 illustrating the responses. Among the respondents, 22 participants (39%) expressed agreement, while 17 (30%) strongly concurred that they derive satisfaction from their respective school placements. Conversely, a minority, encompassing 12 participants (21.4%), indicated discontentment with their school environment, as depicted in Figure 4.

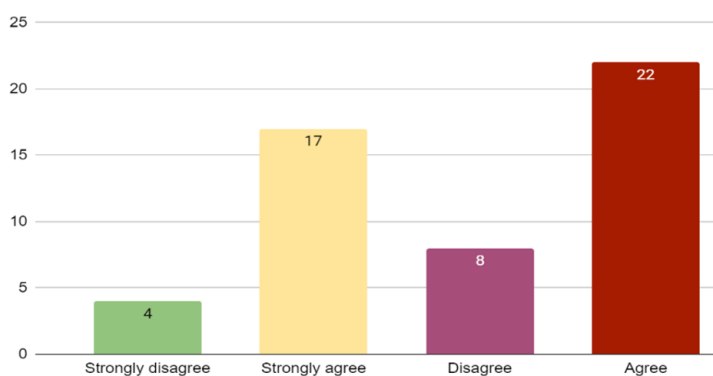


Figure 4. Satisfaction levels among beginner teachers with their current school environment

Participants were queried regarding their agreement or disagreement with the statement concerning their perception of their current school environment: “Would you like to change schools if that was possible?” Approximately, 34% of the participants expressed disagreement with the assertion. Conversely, 39.6% of the participants indicated their intention to seek employment at a different school. This signifies that 39.6% of instructors harbour dissatisfaction with their current workplace. Consequently, these teachers are experiencing a lack of fulfilment within their respective school settings.

Feedback Mechanism and Their Impacts on Beginner Teachers

The beginner teachers received feedback from the school administrators or their superiors to improve their teaching. The feedback mechanisms provided to the beginner teachers is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Feedback mechanisms for beginner teachers

Feedback mechanism	Feedback Providers	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Feedback following direct observation of your classroom teaching	Leading teacher	45	79
	Assigned mentors	7	13
	Principal	2	4
	Other teachers	1	2
	Never received feedback	1	2
Feedback from student surveys about your teaching	Leading teacher	36	64
	Assigned mentors	4	7
	Principal	3	5
	Other teachers	2	4
	Never received feedback	11	20
Feedback following an analysis of your students' test scores	Leading teacher	30	53
	Assigned mentors	9	16
	Principal	6	11
	Other teachers	5	9
	Never received feedback	6	11
Feedback following your self-assessment of your own work (e.g., presentation of a portfolio assessment)	Leading teacher	33	59
	Assigned mentors	4	7
	Principal	3	5
	Other teachers	4	7
	Never received feedback	12	22
Feedback following surveys or discussions with parents	Leading teacher	30	53
	Assigned mentors	6	11
	Principal	4	7
	Other teachers	6	11
	Never received feedback	10	18

Overall, the responses to this query revealed that the primary providers of essential feedback to beginner teachers in Laamu Atoll were the leading teachers. As leading teachers prioritise collaborative endeavours to enhance instructional practices, their leadership approaches undergo refinement (Williamson & Blackburn, 2021). Moreover, it has been emphasised that the capacity to engage instructors in constructive dialogue regarding their teaching methodologies is imperative for cultivating effective instructional leadership (Williamson & Blackburn, 2021). It is

noteworthy that between 18–22% of the teachers reported never receiving feedback from student surveys regarding their teaching, nor following their self-assessment of their own work, or subsequent to surveys or discussions with parents.

The respondents were also asked to what extent feedback led to positive change in terms of their public recognition from the principal or colleagues, their role in school development initiatives, the amount of professional development they undertake, their job responsibilities at the school, their confidence as a teacher, their classroom management practices, their knowledge and understanding of their main subject, their teaching practices, their methods for teaching students with special needs, their use of student assessments to improve student learning, and their motivation as a teacher. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Extent of positive change induced by feedback across various teaching dimensions

	No change		Small change		Moderate change		Large change	
	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%	(n)	%
Your public recognition from the principal or your colleagues	4	7.6	15	28.8	25	48	8	15
Your role in the school development initiatives	2	4	16	30	21	40	14	26
The amount of professional development you undertake	5	9.4	17	32	19	36	12	22.6
Your job responsibilities at this school	2	4	12	22	17	31	23	43
Your confidence as a teacher	3	5.6	10	19	19	35.8	21	39.6
Your classroom management practices	1	2	8	15	25	48	18	35
Your knowledge and understanding of your main subject	1	2	6	12	24	48	19	38
Your teaching practices	2	3.7	6	11.3	24	45	21	40
Your methods for teaching students with special needs	4	8	10	20	23	46	13	26
Your use of student assessments to improve student	1	2	11	21	24	45	17	32
Your motivation as a teacher	2	4	7	13	19	37	24	46

It is significant to note that only a small fraction of participants reported the absence of positive changes resulting from the feedback.

Challenges Faced by Beginner Teachers and Proposed Solutions

Beginner teachers in the Laamu Atoll of the Maldives encounter various challenges as they embark on their careers. Notably, 14% of respondents highlighted inadequacies in teaching materials within their respective schools. Additionally, 2.1% of teachers faced challenges related to deficient communication channels with school administration during their inaugural year of teaching. Furthermore, 2.4% of educators reported struggles in managing student behaviour, while an equivalent percentage expressed hindrances in assuming leadership roles due to their novice status. Similarly, 2.4% of instructors identified students' reluctance to engage in learning as a significant challenge. These challenges underscore the need for targeted support and resources to aid beginner teachers in overcoming initial obstacles and thriving in their roles.

To address the challenges faced by beginner teachers, various solutions have been proposed by stakeholders in the education sector. Approximately 2.9% of respondents recommended implementing peer observation and constructive feedback mechanisms to support beginning teachers. Similarly, a similar percentage advocated for the provision of essential teaching resources such as library facilities, computer labs, and science laboratories. Additionally, 2.9% of educators proposed the implementation of teacher orientation programs to address the unfamiliarity of new entrants to the profession. These proposed solutions aim to provide beginner teachers with the necessary support and resources to navigate the challenges they encounter and foster a conducive learning environment for both educators and students alike.

Discussion

This study investigated the experiences of beginner teachers in Laamu Atoll, Maldives, in terms of their perceptions of their first-year experience, feedback mechanism at their school placement and challenges faced. The findings indicate that the needs of beginner teachers are exceptionally high. Insufficient support from senior teachers and administrators, as evidenced by the data and previous studies, leads to heightened stress and frustration among these educators in Laamu. Furthermore, the new teachers' perception of being overworked and bearing a significant sense of responsibility exacerbates their worries and stress levels. According to Liscandrello (n.d.), assigning excessive workloads can induce stress among teachers due to the multitude of responsibilities they must manage.

Experts suggest that implementing mentoring or induction programs for new teachers can reduce attrition rates and enhance teacher effectiveness (Sözen, 2018). Standardising support services, such as induction programs, across schools is crucial to mitigate variations and foster coping mechanisms for stress among beginning teachers. Despite this, the study reveals that only 77.8% of beginner teachers in Laamu Atoll received support services from their schools. A significant portion (39.6%) expressed willingness to transfer to another school, suggesting potential attrition if their concerns are not addressed promptly. As such, school administrators should identify these concerns and incentivise these teachers to remain in their current positions.

The challenges faced by beginner teachers in Laamu Atoll schools during their first year include both physical and mental exhaustion due to extensive after-hours work, including lesson preparation and student assessments. The findings were consistent with Charleston-Cormier (2010) and Algozzine et al. (2007). The participants cited a substantial gap between theoretical knowledge and classroom realities, particularly in classroom management and student discipline. This discrepancy underscores the importance of refining teaching courses to better align with practical teaching experiences and the ongoing development of teaching skills post-graduation.

Resource inadequacies in schools, such as lacking basic facilities like computer labs and libraries, pose significant hindrances to effective teaching and learning. The absence of these resources not only impacts students' educational experiences but also limits teachers' instructional capabilities. Furthermore, beginner teachers often lack support from their colleagues, which is essential for professional growth and effective classroom management. Additionally, restrictions on teachers' input in decision-making processes concerning teaching methodologies and curriculum further contribute to their dissatisfaction. The surveys conducted among first-year teachers have highlighted the substantial impact of working conditions on instructors' decisions to either depart from the profession or seek employment elsewhere (Simpson, 2016).

The emotional toll of navigating the teaching profession, compounded by a lack of support and resources, leads many beginner teachers to reconsider their career choices. Job satisfaction emerges as a critical factor influencing teacher retention, with satisfied teachers exhibiting lower levels of stress and burnout. Addressing the needs of beginner teachers through mentorship programs, resource provision, and fostering a supportive school climate is paramount to improving teacher retention and ultimately, enhancing educational outcomes.

In response to these challenges, proposed solutions include the implementation of mentorship programs, provision of basic school resources, and fostering stronger relationships among teachers and parents. Furthermore, regular feedback on performance, professional development opportunities, and inclusive decision-

making processes are recommended to support beginner teachers' transition into the profession effectively.

The recommendations derived from participants' contributions in this study encompass various crucial adjustments aimed at improving the effectiveness of novice teachers' services. Firstly, meticulous examination of tasks assigned to novice teachers is proposed, in line with Ritchie's (2021) emphasis on the importance of classroom observation for assessing and refining teaching methodologies. Additionally, the integration of emerging technologies into teaching practices is advocated, as it not only enhances productivity but also diversifies learning modalities for students (School of Education, 2020). Furthermore, participants stressed the necessity of equipping educators with essential resources to effectively implement the national curriculum, alongside regular observation and feedback sessions to support professional growth (McFadzien, 2015).

Addressing novice educators' unfamiliarity with school policies and regulations, tailored orientation programs within educational institutions are recommended (TISB Training Academy, n.d.). Mentorship programs are highlighted as crucial, facilitating the integration of novice teachers into the institutional fabric and reducing attrition rates (McKinley, 2017; Moir, 2016; Wasonga et al., 2015). However, the study also notes the need for sustained mentorship beyond the initial year to support ongoing professional development (Aarts et al., 2020).

This study suggests that teachers require support and guidance to overcome challenges, similar to the findings of Jain et al. (2023), who also emphasised the need for assistance when implementing new teaching techniques, such as flipped classroom. This reiterates the general findings of this study. Additionally, participants emphasised the importance of maintaining school facilities, which contributes to a conducive learning environment and reduces teacher turnover rates (Shuls & Flores, 2020). Thus, it is recommended that the Maldives Education Ministry prioritise the establishment of mentorship initiatives for novice teachers and explore innovative, cost-effective strategies for maintaining school facilities within budgetary constraints.

Conclusion and Recommendations for Future Study

The experiences of beginner teachers in Laamu Atoll mirror those documented in the existing literature. The insights gleaned from this study hold significance and utility for various stakeholders within the education sector, including beginner teachers themselves, policymakers, researchers, and school principals, as there exists a paucity of research focusing specifically on beginner teachers working in atolls. The challenges encountered by these novice educators and the proposed solutions align closely with established literature. Notably, beginner teachers in this study reported

receiving feedback from lead teachers, principals, and designated senior staff, with many also attesting to receiving additional guidance and support as needed.

Moreover, participants elucidated the hurdles they confronted during their initial years of teaching, encompassing resource constraints within schools, classroom management difficulties, insufficient peer support, and a lack of readiness for real-world classroom scenarios. To mitigate these challenges, participants offered solutions, including the implementation of mentorship programs within schools and the provision of requisite materials to facilitate the delivery of the national curriculum. Based on the study's findings, it is recommended that new teachers receive structured support, particularly during their first and second years of employment, given that even second-year teachers express lingering concerns regarding professional fulfilment. Furthermore, it is advised that such support be facilitated by trained coaches capable of discerning and addressing the unique needs of individual teachers.

The implications of this study extend to the enhancement of the Maldives' future education system, particularly concerning the integration of beginner teachers. Consequently, the findings stand to benefit teacher educators and school administrators by fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by both novice and experienced educators, thereby informing more effective support mechanisms.

This study has a few limitations. Only 56 out of 60 beginning teachers participated from Laamu Atoll, thus necessitating a cautious application of the study's conclusions. Further investigations targeting beginner teachers in other atoll schools are recommended to comprehensively understand the enabling factors and challenges encountered by novice educators. Given the divergent situations across islands and atolls within the Maldives, it is crucial to acknowledge that the findings of this study may not universally apply to all beginner teachers. Predicated upon responses exclusively from Laamu Atoll, the study's generalisability is inherently limited. Nevertheless, by fostering a positive and nurturing work environment, this study potentially contributes to instigating social change, potentially influencing the retention decisions of inexperienced teachers. Notably, the implementation of classroom observations and coaching in the initial year demonstrates significant benefits on teaching proficiency by the third year (Aarts et al., 2020), with subsequent potential to enhance student achievement. Further research endeavours, involving a more expansive cohort of beginning teachers, are imperative.

This study identified the predominant concern of beginner teachers as the scarcity of resources, alongside a concurrent shift in focus toward their professional role and the broader organisational context within schools. Consequently, induction programs for new educators should encompass a comprehensive approach, addressing varied concerns ranging from material needs to issues concerning professional identity and

broader contextual apprehensions. A deeper exploration of inter-island variables is warranted to refine our understanding of the experiences of beginning teachers in Laamu Atoll and other Maldivian schools. Moreover, qualitative inquiries could offer invaluable insights by directly engaging beginner teachers through interviews, as advocated by Cleland (2017), facilitating an exploration of nuanced human experiences that defy quantification. This study, originally aimed at scrutinising the alignment between teacher concerns and the efficacy of induction activities, underscores the need for more explicit delineation between concerns and support mechanisms.

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