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"Minority Students' Experiences are Part of Our Life of Teaching": Hierarchical Multiple Regressions of Vietnamese Teacher Autonomous Motivation and Teacher Engagement

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***Abstract*:** This article seeks to understand teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement of Vietnamese in-service teachers of English working with Vietnamese ethnic minority students, by presenting their voices and experiences as a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Relying on the Self-Determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), this quantitative study draws insights into Vietnamese K-12 English teachers of ethnic minority groups, when it comes to intrinsic, external, introjected, and identified motivation in support of their continuation of daily teaching activities and their further teaching professions. These aspects are likely to be translated into their sense of engagement in their professional contexts to different extents. Applying purposeful sampling for quantitative data collection, we primarily focus on drawing from the teachers' self-rated competence to better explore a wide range of Vietnamese education insights regarding Vietnamese minority groups. Our findings, based on the multiple rounds of hierarchical multiple regression, suggest that teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement appear to be closely associated. Some relevant associations are found to occur under the influence of the teachers' demographic backgrounds, including personal, familial, and educational experiences. Pedagogical implications are also presented at the end of our study, making way for future research to continue this important scholarship.
***Keywords*:** teacher autonomous motivation, teacher engagement, ethnic minority, Vietnamese education, quantitative research.

Schools serve as a space for students of different academic, social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds to develop their potential. Unfortunately, we see that schools mirror the existing societal inequities and injustices within educational institutions, particularly for minority groups of students. Recently in Vietnam, more effort has been devoted to uncovering the unwanted outcomes that national policies have exacerbated, with the intention to provide equal access to learning and maintain high student enrollment. Clearly, a wide range of educational inequalities within Vietnam are prominent. Students belonging to minority groups are more unlikely to have better learning outcomes at the primary school level, better participation at the lower secondary school levels, and more effective completion of the upper-

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secondary school levels (Dang & Glewwe, 2018; World Bank, 2019).

The case of Vietnam offers meaningful relevance for other education systems and the potential for the formation of sustainable quality and equality. The increasing amount of research has extensively addressed the inequality in schools between majority and minority student populations via the redistribution of educational resources. However, the actual outcomes remain overlooked as unequal learning, thus going completely unaddressed to a large extent. Therefore, it is important to study whether Vietnamese K-12 in-service teachers develop autonomous motivation to enact engagement, including adapting curriculum and pedagogy. Such practices have produced many favorable learning environments, if the teachers' autonomous motivation and multi-dimensional engagement are maintained.

This article seeks to understand the autonomous motivation and engagement of Vietnamese in-service K-12 teachers working with ethnic minority students, by presenting their voices and experiences as a hierarchical multiple regression analysis. The current study draws insights into K-12 teachers' external and intrinsic motivations to continue their daily teaching activities and further their teaching profession, which can be translated into their sense of engagement in the perspective context. We focus on drawing from the teachers' self-rated competence to better conceptualize Vietnamese insights, prior to calling for future studies on this rarely investigated topic. Therefore, in this paper, we report findings from a quantitative, one-time self-rated level of autonomous motivation and engagement, which can help to overcome learning inequities in Vietnam. Specifically, this paper has three research questions:

1. Did Vietnamese teachers hold positive levels of autonomous motivation and engagement when closely teaching K-12 minority students?
2. Did Vietnamese teachers' levels of autonomous motivation and multi-dimensional engagement vary when they closely teach K-12 minority students, in accordance with their demographic backgrounds?
3. To what extent could Vietnamese teachers of K-12 minority students positively translate their sense of autonomous motivation into engagement?

Vietnam and Educational Policy for the English Language Education

The socialist-market ideology inspired Vietnam's economic strategies following the *Open-door* policy in 1986, which aimed to shift the nation's efforts in light of a global capitalist economy. However, it was commonly seen that the country was heavily influenced by the socialist principles, which involved the (in)direct creation of economic inequalities in the many societies across the nation. Socially and culturally, as the country colonized throughout history, attempts to reach nationalism and unity in Vietnam have been a top priority. Therefore, the country has continued to try and tighten divisions among national identities (such as the Kinh and minority groups) as a consequence of continued revolutions, foreign wars, and in-country struggles.

However, this progress has moved very slowly. For example, the populations of ethnic minority groups have been called to be 'backwards,' with very little sources of their cultural values and practices, which should be available for the realization of unity and development in the country. A perfect example, according to many statistical reports and unpublished public discussions, ethnic minorities are subjects of what people have described as living under the critical line of poverty (Bui, 2014; Giacchino-Baker, 2007; World Bank, 2019). Therefore, before achieving the goals of unity and nationalism, it is critical for ethnic minority groups to receive adequate attention from the public, in order to improve their standards of life, equal to Kinh groups, perhaps. Also, the nation has encouraged close communication between the groups, and to avoid using stereotypes of minority students as "*backwards, ignorant, or lacking*

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aptitude persist" (DeJaeghere et al., 2021, p. 5, cited in McElwee, 2008). In addition to culture, the language of the ethnic minority groups is also a barrier to achieve the nation's sustainable development. Despite the nation's promise to maintain cultural diversity by encouraging people to use their first language to help "preserve their ethnic identity and nurture their fine customs, traditions, and cultures" (Vietnamese Government, 1992), the reality is that the Vietnamese language and/or cultures of the Kinh people is largely dominant.

The educational system in Vietnam is widely recognized as highly centralized, with the Ministry of Education and Training having the most power to directly control policy, curriculum, and delivered practices across grade levels and across the regions. Similar to what has been written above, despite the adoption of a market-oriented economy, education is structured and implemented by the hand of a single-communist party. The country has 54 ethnic groups, with more than 80% encompassing Kinh people (Central Statistics Office, 2011). Because the Vietnamese ethnic minorities make up nearly half of the poor, the government has a long-term goal to improve their socioeconomic standing. For instance, Baulch et al. (2010) they can receive subsidies in order to afford access to educational resources. This has led to a substantial enrollment increase of these student groups. However, the unfortunate fact is that schools located in these disadvantaged regions are still operated by the social hierarchies which failed to meet the goals of diversity (Giacchino-Baker 2007; McElwee, 2008; World Bank, 2019). More attentively, teaching workforces, teaching materials, and teaching practices have long been enacted based on a one-size-fit-all approach, regardless of the unique characteristics of the Vietnamese minority students. In light of Vietnam's nationalist education objectives, as well as integration and assimilation of all groups (Tran & Walter, 2010), a *one-size-fit-all* curriculum was strongly recommended, in addition to the Vietnamese language as a medium of instruction (Bui, 2014; Doan, 2005; Lucius, 2009; Salomon & Vu, 2007; Vu, 2021). Therefore, it is not surprising that Vietnam has good learning equity, although learning inequality is a major problem for ethnic minorities (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2016).

With regards to educational policies to promote the English language in Vietnam, it is suggested that learning English is a privilege of children whose parents can provide quality education. The most recent English language policy reform in 2008 aimed to increase national development and regional employability (Decision 1400/QD-TTg, 2008[2]). Among the promising and foreseeable benefits, those who took the important role of teaching English have no room to exercise their agency, share their voices, and prioritize their needs. For those working with and teaching K-12 minority students, they are overshadowed by their difficulties. One of them includes their learners' inability to learn the English language, which is very impractical (Bui, 2014) and results in the loss of student motivation and effort. Another is their pedagogical knowledge, which is very limited in regards to their target learners, resulting in under-achievement, as expected by the Ministry of Education and Training (MOET)'s education policy on English language (Nguyen & Bui, 2016).

Theoretical Framework

In this section, we would like to further develop our theoretical stances on teachers' autonomous motivation by employing the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) when it comes to the types of motivation to be partially or fully developed, in parallel with the sustained continuum of autonomy that past research has discovered. Along this continuum, we have found the two ends, with the least autonomous motivation being *external* and its counterpart being *intrinsic*. The behavior of *external* motivation is regulated and controlled by an assortment of

[2] Decision No. 1400/QD-TTg, dated 30 September 2008 of the Prime Minister on the Approval of the Project entitled "Teaching and Learning Foreign Lan- guages in the National Education System, Period 2008–2020".

external elements that Ryan and Connel (1989) exemplified on the basis of positive material rewards or negative consequences, instead of being enabled through will. To make it comprehensive, Grolnick and Ryan (1989) argue that internal and external behaviors should go together with social norms and rules, with very little changes or revisions needed.

On the other side of the continuum, those with *intrinsic* motivation engage in activities due to what they think will become a reality. Under these circumstances, individuals would define themselves as being very excited, concentrated, joyful, and enthusiastic about their chosen engagement. Also, it should be taken into consideration that *intrinsic* motivation is fostered in a way that results from support from others to meet their needs, which is important for achieving autonomy.

Next to *external* motivation on the continuum is *introjected* motivation, where we find gradually positive behaviors of someone who has the desire to work on something because of their feelings and attitudes. The way people behave with *introjected* motivation is normally based on them being guilty or ashamed of themselves, due to choosing not to do certain things. On top of that, they are also concerned with how others believe they manage to do certain things, which accounts for their decisions to strive for positive outcomes. As we may see it, despite the fact that *introjected* motivation is examined in little relation compared to *external* motivation, this type of autonomous motivation appears to be somehow controlled with a small chance of autonomy. Those possessing this type of autonomous motivation reside in societies that encourage or insist them to follow certain rules or behaviors. Therefore, they act because they have to, not purely because they want to. Alternatively, the restricted ways they have to behave contrast from their natural and/or unconscious desires, otherwise they attribute their wrong-doing to their loss of individual self-esteem (e.g., Assor et al., 2004).

Nearing the other end of the continuum, *identified* motivation is generally regarded as relatively autonomous because those whose activities are broadly accepted by others will feel personally privileged to act in certain ways. Escaping from the previous form of *introjected* motivation, which promotes contextually restricted acts, this subsequent form results in individuals choosing to act because, in their minds, they need to do what they find is meaningful to embark on. Furthermore, what they choose to do is closely aligned with their personal values and goals in many facets of life. According to Grolnick and Ryan (1989), and later supported by Ryan et al. (1993), *identified* motivation enables individuals to develop a sense of agency to make informed decisions. Opposite to *external* motivation, no pressure exists when asking them to manage their choices. Given that full autonomy is not available to some extent, well-being is their primary outcome. The next motivation, *integrated*, results from reciprocally assimilating one's identities with other aspects of the person's self. Both *identified* and *integrated* motivations share similar characteristics (such as autonomy and self-determination) and are considered relatively autonomous. Therefore, when regulated, people experience a sense of self-determination (Vansteenkiste et al., 2004).

In-service Teacher Motivation

Teacher motivation is a long-studied topic to solidify true definitions and meaning, but it seems that the discoveries have not reached a consensus. According to Michaelowa (2002), teacher motivation has been closely linked to a "psychological force that enables action and underlines teachers' involvement/non-involvement in every teaching activity" (p. 859). In order to clarify how teacher motivation can be conceptualized, Hassaskhah (2016) offers a clearer conceptualization of multi-phased teacher motivation. In the work of Hassaskhah (2016), the first phase was studied via Maslow's (1943) stances that self-actualization and professional attainment are the two main intrinsic needs of teachers. Moving to the second phase, the author developed the ideas of other scholars, including Hunt (1965), by adding the roles of external

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motivation to challenge the perspectives related to the sole contribution of intrinsic motivation. The third phase, the most important, was built on the premise of the previous two phases and was used for Hassaskhah (2016) to confirm that there is a necessary continuum that goes from external to intrinsic motivation. For this third phase, self-determination theory was particularly helpful (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Also, we have never lost our appreciation towards Dörnyei and Ushioda's (2011) efforts. They shared that teacher motivation is formed by their conceptions of motivation, which is classified by their motivations to teach and to sustain their roles in teaching jobs. They connect their views on teacher agency to four distinctive categories, including intrinsic motivation, social contextual influences, temporal dimensions, and demotivating factors. We use this definition as our lens to delve into our teachers' motivation when closely associated with the various stages that inform their teaching careers (e.g., coming to know about teaching, attending their teacher education programs, engaging in continuous professional development, investing in their teaching courses, and living their teaching profession).

Research on motivation of in-service teachers in general, and in-service English teachers in particular, plays an important role in many aspects of teaching and learning (de Jesus & Lens, 2005). They include, but are not limited to, teachers' professional development, learners' (non-)academic success, and national education reforms. Specifically, inspired by the SDT that we mentioned above, we have seen that numerous articles expanded the values of this model to better understand how teacher motivation originates and becomes further developed (Roth et al., 2007). One of the most common findings, cited from the work of Assor et al. (2007), showed that culture is very important. Thus, the extent to which teachers are aware of, or perceive what that culture offers, can make a profound contribution to their sense of external or intrinsic motivation. Circling back to the findings of Deci et al. (1982), it is true that culture may involve the collaboration of individuals whose responsibilities and power widely vary, hence teacher motivation is certainly a result of how they view themselves in relation to those individuals. Their relationships with their supervisors might be an example of this, given that teachers' motivations towards certain things are often their supervisors' wants, which greatly influences their exercise of autonomy and realized acts. In the same year as Assor et al. (2007), it was also discovered that autonomous motivation is predicated on their manifold purposes, including their passions about, and interest in, win-win situations such as their well-being, supportive teaching, continuous learning, and well-deserved recognitions.

In the field of English language education, investigations on teacher motivation have grown significantly over the past few decades. Clearly, inspired by the world's use of English, more and more pertinent research findings in many topics have been expanded to reach groups of non-native English teachers in addition to native English teachers. We review important findings based on the clustered themes as follows. The most dominant approach to understand is heavily dependent on intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. On the one hand, Christopher (2010) discussed that teaching is itself a prime reason to help teachers "live" in their career, not something else. In favor of this view, it may be reasoned that evolving enthusiasm within them reinforces optimistic attitudes about their teaching careers. Sugino (2010) pointed out there are poor outcomes related to extrinsic motivation. Both studies showed that other related dimensions, such as job pay, career opportunities, school facilities, workplace culture, teaching resources, and even their students, were likely to demotivate them instead.

Why is teacher (autonomous) motivation important and worth investigating across educational levels and across educational contexts? Based on what we have found from the existing literature, we came to understand that teacher motivation is a deciding factor for not only themselves in terms of self-growth, self-success, and self-attainment, but also their students' outcomes. Two prominent works show these connections. First, Baleghizadeh and Gordani (2012) illustrated the essence of teacher motivation towards formation of career

success, inclusive teaching quality, engagement at work, and sustainable professional commitment. The study explained that teacher motivation can assist in the development of a wide range of important competencies and dispositions, thus meeting what is required of them to be an effective teacher in the workforce. Beyond that, although it is clearly known that teacher motivation is absolutely trainable, Karavas (2010) displayed that teachers' demographics certainly decide the shape of teacher motivation, thus influencing the outcomes regarding work quality, professional identities, and career sustainability. More importantly, Roth et al. (2007) aided us to recognize down-to-the-earth and eye-opening knowledge about teacher motivation. They corroborated the accurately reflected term – autonomous motivation – in determining its contribution to teaching for both teachers and learners. This work profoundly contributes to widening the room for our better understanding of teacher motivation besides the traditional categories of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. To replace the traditional viewpoint, they borrowed Deci and Ryan's (1985) perspectives to acknowledge that authenticity is purposeful to differentiate between autonomous motivation and controlling motivation. This task of differentiation encouraged Roth et al. (2007) to take a closer look at the link between autonomous motivation and teacher engagement. Studying a group of 132 Israeli teachers and 1,255 students, Roth et al. (2007) offered a good glimpse that autonomous motivation is empowering enough to facilitate teachers' accomplishments and positive engagements. During this process, Roth et al. (2007) explained that the more autonomously motivated, the higher chance of being authentic to themselves, career choices, and work-related decisions. It is consistent that autonomously motivated teachers are seriously caring about the purpose of teaching, how teaching should be conducted, and which actions are authentically needed for the sake of the job. Therefore, they would create their own autonomous-supportive teaching and behaviors.

In this study, we incorporate the viewpoints of Roth et al. (2007) into our conceptual lens, for the following reasons. The presented concept fully recognizes the importance and contribution of the many stakeholders inside and beyond schools in terms of the developmental process behind teachers' autonomous motivation and is not limited to what is associated with students. As a result, our scholarly confidence lies in the findings of Roth et al. (2007) concerning teacher autonomous motivation, which partly informs the concrete birth of autonomy-supportive teaching that indirectly leads to students' motivation and positive behaviors. In regard to the contextual factors, an assortment of state/national policies, school cultures, school leadership resources, colleague relationships, and parents may be controlling factors that impact the shaping of autonomous motivation (also depicted in other studies such as Assor and Oplatka (2003) and Talmor et al. (2005)). In addition, what occurs within teachers' internal selves (e.g., personal feelings, dreams, hopes, knowledge holding/acquisition, and values) is translated into their work through their identity formation (Norton, 2008). Assor and Oplatka (2003) considered this a necessary step to develop teachers' autonomous motivation in a positive manner. In this regard, Norton (2008) clarified the ways in which people can identify themselves, including the types of people they are, their membership status in certain communities, and who they are in relation to others in their contexts.

Teacher Engagement

We decided to theoretically approach teacher engagement as a specific form of work engagement with the teachers in their relevant settings, including classrooms and school campuses. Similar to the developing theories on work engagement, we start by referring to Kahn (1990), who presented the efforts and concentrations of members in the organizations into their assigned work roles (and titles). Stemming from it, May et al. (2004) continued to work by clarifying the three aspects of engagement of those workers, including physical,

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cognitive, and emotional aspects. Notably, it is worth mentioning that other leading scholars have presented similar perspectives (Fredricks et al., 2004; Linnenbrink & Pintrich, 2003). According to Fredricks et al. (2004), cognitive engagement refers to individuals' goals, investments, and self-regulation, all of which support their mastery of skills and abilities to understand sophisticated matters. Fredricks et al. (2004) also argue that emotional engagement can be tested by their positive or negative reactions, which can influence their willingness and desire to participate in certain activities. According to Linnenbrink and Pintrick (2003), behavioral engagement can be observed by others in the form of participation in activities.

These involvements are fundamental factors that make room for "negotiable relation in which the person drives personal energies into role behaviors and displays the self within the role through self-expression" (Kahn, 1990, p. 700). Based on the ideas of Kahn (1990) and May et al. (2004), we can ready our definition to support our research, which comprises our classification of the teachers' assigned roles and responsibilities that they agreed to work on in their teaching service. Since we began our study examining work engagement for our investigation of teacher engagement, we should admit that once the teachers are recruited, they are expected to put effort towards meeting agreed responsibilities (via their job descriptions), which can be quantitatively and qualitatively measured by their investment of energy, dedication to work and people around them, and the immersion of themselves in their workplace's planned or unplanned activities. Therefore, with our attention on teachers as workers, seasonal, contracted, and long-term teachers should focus on prioritizing their quality of work towards their students' satisfaction and the chance to extend their employment contracts. These two groups of teachers and learners were indicated in a few past studies (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2015; Corno & Anderman, 2015; Klassen et al., 2013).

Grounded within work engagement, we are very interested to see whether teacher engagement is a compelling reflection of the contextual invite. This refers to the calling, which is more than the virtue of God's gifts and plans. Being English teachers for years after completing teacher education programs and now being teacher educators, we feel very eagerly interested in the values of being a teacher as far as our recognition of intrinsic meaning. From the reflections of Bunderson and Thompson (2009), we found that being a teacher is descriptive of our helpful existence in the well-built place of "the world of productive work that one was created, designed, or destined" (p. 33) and of our well-drawn life purposes of bridging a "connection between personal passions and endowments and particular domains of work for which those passions and endowments seem particularly well-suited" (p. 37). Hence, we figure there are unique characteristics of being a teacher compared to other professions, but we do not offer implications that other professions hold less value.

Returning to our examination of teacher engagement as a focus of this research, being employed as a teacher means one should engage in their job, via the delivery of content knowledge, solidification of connections, exercise of autonomy and flexibility, and negotiation of work schedules. In spite of timely changes, it is helpful to know that traditional views of being a teacher have considerably remained steady. Teachers require high levels of commitment, and once becoming a teacher, they predominantly wish to make a big difference in their educational settings (Betts, 2011). Betts (2011) cemented the views of Rutter and Jacobson (1986), suggesting that they are interested in "convey[ing] a sense of enthusiasm for the content they were teaching, [and] care deeply about the success of their students [of different ages and educational levels]," but they promisingly "could learn more, take pride in their work, and [build a] sense of confidence and optimism" (p. 2). Importantly, teacher engagement at work does not naturally take place, as it seems to be shaped by many contextual factors. The teaching job's characteristics, school culture, and compensation and benefits can benefit or worsen the quality of teacher engagement (Bakker & Bal, 2010; Bermejo-Toro et al. 2015). For example, teaching practice may be represented a justification behind teachers' engagement

(Guthrie et al., 2012). Moreover, rewards are believed to better motivate teachers, thus stimulating their sense of engagement (Bermejo-Toro et al., 2015). Following that, their classrooms, feelings of being supported or supervised, and wider social climates are predictors (Bakker & Bal, 2010).

In this study, in order to examine organizational and teacher work engagement, we fully understand that teachers of learners coming from diverse backgrounds should be unarguably: (i) willing to invest themselves in their work, (ii) psychologically attending, and (iii) proactive to high quality work performance. This is what we have learned from empirical sources (Bakker et al., 2012; Klassen et al., 2013). These aspects should be taken into close consideration. With that in mind, teachers can be supported to maximize the possibilities of effective teaching environments (such as inclusion of health-care programs, avoidance of burnout and stress, provision of educational resources and professional development, and recognition of teachers' positive performances) and maximize their engagement with the transformation of students' lives in direct connection with their educational experiences.

Largely motivated by the Bakker et al. (2012) quantification of work engagement, Klassen et al. (2013) reported success in terms of constructing a measurement that underlines levels of teacher engagement at the school levels and beyond. Klassen et al. (2013) shared in their continued work that the employment of Baker et al. (2011) serves as an advantage to account for the unique characteristics of teachers and their teaching contexts. Validated and confirmed by the latest research (Corno & Anderman, 2015), the construction of a measurement (Engaged teachers Scale – ETS) played a role in disseminating knowledge about teacher engagement. They clarified four aspects in respect of the internal structures which form teacher engagement. They involve cognitive engagement, emotional engagement, social engagement with students, and social engagement with teachers.

It is empowering to note the inclusion of teachers' social engagement. The creation of relationships with students is an integral component of reinforcing the teachers' meaning of work. Very limited studies have suggested that positive relationships between teachers and students are not necessary, because it is morally true that teachers should attend to their students' wholeheartedly (Chen et al., 2008). In addition, teachers' interactions with peers and supervisors, in many forms, appears to be increasingly helpful towards their growth of cognitive and emotional engagement.

Association between Teacher Autonomous Motivation and Teacher Engagement

There is a clear scarcity of work on modifying the association between teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement, especially within Asian contexts. A majority of the literature has been oriented towards the West. First, Pelletier et al. (2002) used self-determination theory to understand the negative association between teacher external motivation and teacher engagement, with the opposite being true between their intrinsic motivation and engagement. From another lens, Davis and Wilson (2000) included contextual factors to clarify what can shape teacher engagement in a better manner. According to Davis and Wilson (2000), support from school leaders is critical to empower teachers to positively respond to their job responsibilities. Remarkably, another study by Carson and Chase (2009) suggested that culture is also a key determinant of connecting teacher motivation and engagement. Culture can reinforce positive patterns of teacher intrinsic motivation, which then increases their engagement at work.

Beyond their limitations, the three studies in Asia have helped validate our concerns about the lack of literature in this area. Lam et al. (2009) studied school contexts in Hong Kong and showed that teacher motivation predicted their teaching styles and better student outcomes. A more recent study, by Abbas (2013), aimed to define how teacher motivation can be

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translated into positive teaching ethics and performances. The latest investigation by Irnidayanti et al. (2020) expanded the efforts of Abbas (2013) in unearthing how teacher motivation relates to teacher engagement in K-12 education in Indonesia. The findings showed that autonomous motivation, not controlled motivation, predicted teachers' practice.

In Vietnam, several empirical studies examining education for minority students have been conducted. Bui (2018) qualitatively examined optimistic agency, empowerment, and the voices of minority youths surrounding the language policy in school contexts. From the side of teachers of the Vietnamese minority students, DeJaeghere et al. (2021) found that the teachers did not tend to promote socially inclusive teaching to meet the critical needs of their minority students. Also, they preferred teaching methods that favored their Kinh students instead. Therefore, it is fundamental that teachers should have specific roles to support the Vietnamese minority student groups (Vu, 2019), including equipping the prospective teachers of English to be aware of inclusive education (Vu & Nguyen, 2022; Vu et al., 2022a, 2022b). Thus, their teaching decisions "sustain hegemony and produce counter-hegemonies" (DeJaeghere et al., 2021, p. 15). Overall, we still find that more work is to be done in Vietnam to learn the relationship between teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement. Additional studies are needed to strengthen our understanding of these relationships, with emphasis on other people directly/indirectly involved in teaching, and inclusive of other factors including teachers' demographics, school leaders, their colleagues, and students' parents. In this study, we decided to use teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement as the key terms in the rest of this paper.

Table 1
Demographics

		No.	**Percentage (%)**
Gender			
	Male	68	16.500
	Female	343	83.500
Work experience			
	Less than 5 years	42	10.200
	5-10 years	52	12.700
	10-20 years	177	43.100
	More than 20 years	140	34.100
English proficiency[3] (Lang. proficiency)			
	A2	25	6.100
	B1	101	24.600
	B2	243	59.100
	C1 or higher	42	10.200
Students' beginning grades of English learning (Students' beg. Grad)			
	Grade Level 1	49	11.900
	Grade Level 3	257	62.500
	Grade Level 6	105	25.500
Teaching level			
	Primary	166	40.400
	Lower high school	152	37.000
	Upper high school	93	22.600

[3] It is in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR)

The Study

Informed by the ethical approval by Tay Bac University (No[4]. TB 2021-15), our research was quantitatively conducted and ethnographically presented, involving the experiences of researchers who are exposed to the contextual environments for a course of more than eight to ten years. We focused on teachers' self-rated questionnaire responses on two scales, autonomous motivation and engagement. We were also interested in examining the relationship between each scale. Our data collection took place over two months in early 2021, with the support of the Department of Education and Training in a northern area of Vietnam where the second author worked as a teacher educator. The first author regularly visited as a teacher trainer for the large teacher population of that area, where minority students account for more than 80% of the respective total population. As teacher educators and trainers for these relatively fixed populations, we have had many conversations with the students and gained better knowledge about the cultural characteristics associated with their cultural norms and personal experiences, which seem to be inadequately documented. Therefore, during our interpretation, we used our personal voices to translate the statistical information into words that provide sense and meaning.

When adapting the scales previously designed between October and November 2020 for teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement respectively, we tried to stand in the teachers' shoes to more effectively modify the surveys to reword them and to make sure there were no misunderstandings in Vietnamese. However, our survey was translated from English to Vietnamese twice, we used two separate translators to ensure the original meaning of each questionnaire item remained the same.

Our data collection was contingent on purposeful sampling. We informed the participants about the purpose of this research, and made sure they were personally willing to participate and that they were aware they had the freedom to ask for removal from the study at any time. All 411 participants were teaching an English language subject to K-12 minority students at the time of data collection. Our contact details were given to the teachers so that they could contact us at their own convenience, with the right to ask for any clarification while completing the surveys. Incomplete surveys were automatically removed from our database during data analysis.

The questionnaires, which were prepared in the Vietnamese language, included three parts.

- In Section 1, we collected information regarding the teachers' gender, work experience (measured by the number of years), English language proficiency, students' years of English language learning, and students' school levels.
- In Section 2, based on the 4-point Likert scale (with **1** denoting *Strongly disagree*, **2** denoting *Disagree*, **3** denoting *Relatively agree*, **4** denoting *Agree*, and **5** denoting *Strongly agree*), they reflected on their autonomous motivation in across four categories, including *external motivation* (4 items), *introjected motivation* (4 items), *identified motivation* (4 items), and *intrinsic motivation* (4 items).
- In Section 3, based on the 6-point Likert scale (with **1** denoting *Never*, **2** denoting *Rarely*, **3** denoting *on occasion*, **4** denoting *Sometimes*, **5** denoting *Often*, and **6** denoting *Always*), they reflected on their sense of engagement across 16 items, consisting of their *cognitive engagement* (4 items), *emotional engagement* (4 items), *social engagement with students* (4 items), and *social engagement with colleagues* (4 items).

[4] The approval letter will be provided in Appendix C.

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Data Analysis

The demographics of our participants are available in Table 1. We removed 41 responses that were outliers. No responses were removed prior to data analysis, as all survey questions and items were completed by participants. The data were reviewed for internal consistency, and Cronbach's alpha was .926, which suggested that the data were reliable for further analysis. Concerning the four forms of engagement, the KMO measure of sampling adequacy appeared very high, significantly higher than the minimum KMO value of.600 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007). These confirmed that the adequacy of the magnitude of the correlation was met. Details regarding many forms of teacher autonomous motivation are shown in

Table 2
Summary

	KMO	Barlett's	df.	*Correlation range*	% of variance
Teacher Autonomous Motivation					
External	.758	425.952*	6	.498 - .708	59.587
Introjected	.732	366.540*	6	.248 - .569	56.226
Identified	.807	589.747*	6	.447 - .880	66.128
Intrinsic	.783	614.362*	6	.355 - .663	66.223
Teacher engagement					
Cognitive	.760	409.456*	6	.498 - .708	58.625
Emotional	.803	583.146*	6	.248 - .569	65.991
Social w/t students	.762	439.723*	6	.447 - .880	60.002
Social w/t colleagues	.700	248.469*	6	.355 - .663	50.829

* significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The principal components were performed for each form of teacher engagement, in which different established items were clustered based on an Eigenvalue greater than 1.0 with varimax rotation. The scales that resulted from the four separate tests are as follows:

- Figure 1 shows a one-factor scale to cognitive engagement, including 4 items;
- Figure 2 shows a one-factor scale to affective engagement, including 4 items;
- Figure 3 shows a one-factor solution to social engagement with students, including 4 items;
- Figure 4 shows a one-factor scale to social engagement with colleagues, including 4 items;

Figure 1
Cognitive Engagement

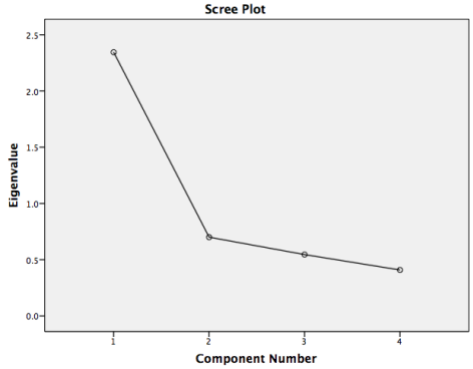


Figure 2
Affective Engagement

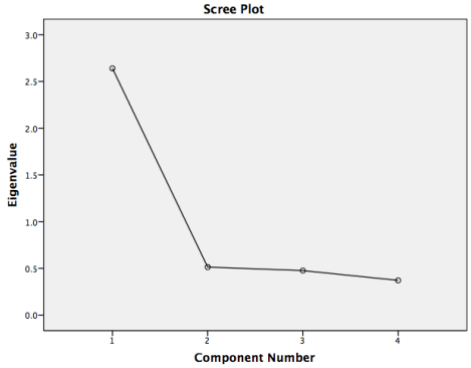


Figure 3
Social Engagement with Students

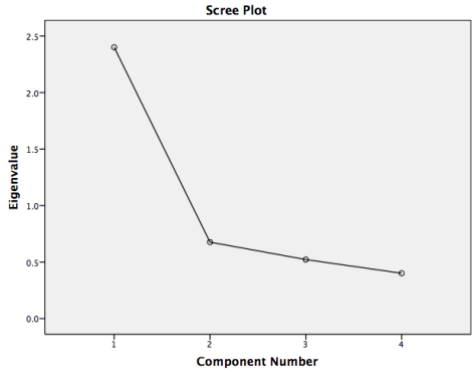
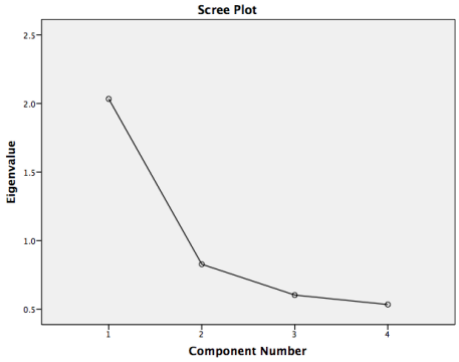


Figure 4
Social Engagement with Colleagues



From Figure 5 to Figure 8, they demonstrate the scales as a result of the four tests of teacher autonomous motivation.

- Figure 5 shows a one-factor scale to external motivation, including 4 items;
- Figure 6 shows a one-factor scale to introjected motivation, including 4 items;
- Figure 7 shows a one-factor solution to identified motivation, including 4 items;
- Figure 8 shows a one-factor scale to intrinsic motivation, including 4 items;

Figure 5
External Motivation

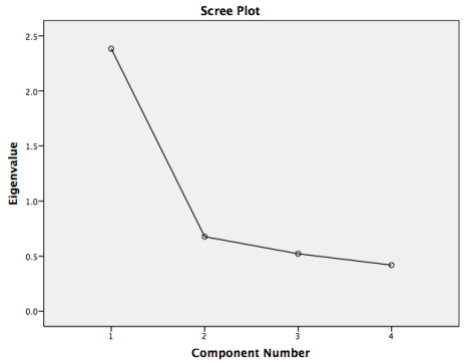


Figure 7
Identified Motivation

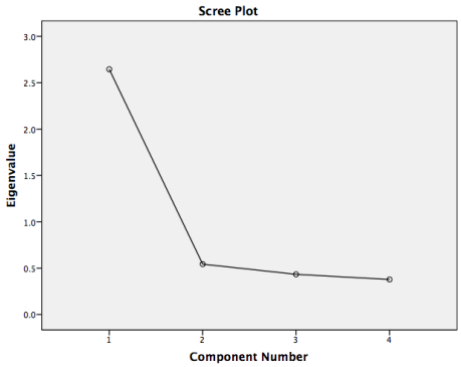


Figure 6
Introjected Motivation

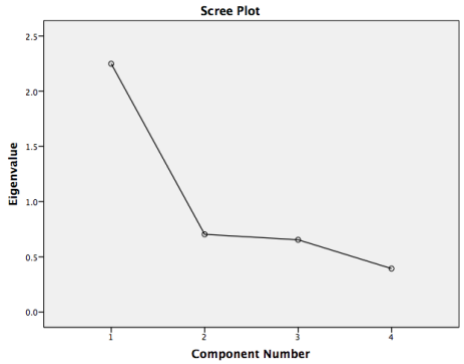
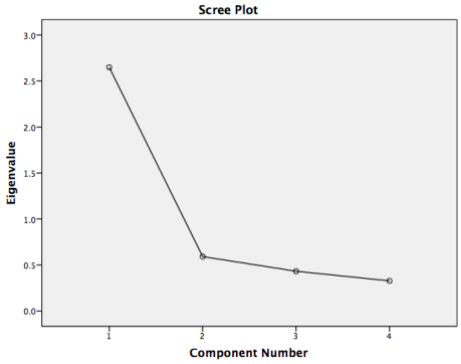


Figure 8
Intrinsic Motivation



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Analytical Correlations

We present the descriptive statistics of and correlations of the study variables related to teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement in Appendix 1. Table 2 reveals the correlation coefficients between the two primary variables, which ranged from 0.284 to 0.457, which were statistically significant. We saw the positive impacts of intrinsic motivation on the four forms of engagement, with the strongest relationship with cognitive engagement and the lowest with social engagement with colleagues. However, we also saw that the external aspects (including the environmental constraints) somehow triggered their sense of engagement, especially cognitive engagement and social engagement with their students.

The levels of engagement were very different between demographics to some extent. First, teacher engagement was different among teachers who worked at varying school levels, except for emotional engagement. Following that, emotional engagement was not affected by any students' demographics. Next, social engagement with students was different among teachers by years of work experience. Lastly, social engagement with colleagues was different among teachers by language proficiency.

Table 3
Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predictors of Cognitive Engagement

Predictor variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3
Constant	5.809	5.732	4.061
Gender	-.042	-.042	.010
Students' beg. grad	-.018	-.016	-.011
School level	-.071**	-.074**	-.052*
Teaching experience		.031	.022
Lang. proficiency		-.006	-.017
External motivation			.045
Introjected motivation			.038
Identified motivation			-.034
Intrinsic motivation			.312***
R^2	.025	.031	.235
F	3.500	2.557	13.654
ΔR^2	.025	.005	.204
ΔF	3.500	1.139	26.714

Note. N = 411, *p < .050; **p < .010; ***p < .001

A hierarchical multiple regression was implemented to evaluate the utility of autonomous motivation factors for predicting our teachers' cognitive engagement at work. Assumptions such as normality, linearity, and multi-collinearity were first examined, and no violations were detected. Table 3 presents the results. Demographic information such as gender, school level, students' starting grade levels (in terms of language learning) were entered in Block 1, which explained 2.500% of the variance in their cognitive engagement. After entering work experience, and language proficiency in Block 2, the total variance explained by the model was 3.100%. In Block 3, where the scales of motivation in the instrument were all entered, the total variance explained by the model was 23.500%. Teachers' cognitive engagement was positively predicted by intrinsic motivation (β = .312, p < .001).

Table 4

Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predictors of Emotional Engagement

Predictor variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3
Constant	5.781***	5.725***	4.136***
Gender	-.055	-.055	-.003
Students' beg. grad	-.015	-.013	-.004
School level	-.054	-.055	-.034
Teaching experience		.033	.02
Lang. proficiency		-.016	-.025
External motivation			.097**
Introjected motivation			-.009
Identified motivation			-.063
Intrinsic motivation			0.321***
R^2	.014	.020	.198
F	1.947	1.652	11.015***
ΔR^2	.014	.006	.178
ΔF	1.947	1.207	22.285***

Note. N = 411, *p < .050; **p < .010; ***p < .001

A second hierarchical multiple regression was implemented to evaluate the utility of autonomous motivation factors for predicting our teachers' emotional engagement at work. Assumptions such as normality, linearity, and multi-collinearity were first examined, and no violations were detected. Table 4 presents the results. Demographic information such as gender, school level, students' starting grade levels (in terms of language learning) were entered in Block 1, which explained 1.400% of the variance in their cognitive engagement. After entering work experience, and language proficiency in Block 2, the total variance explained by the model was 2.000%. In Block 3, where the scales of motivation in the instrument were all entered, the total variance explained by the model was 19.800%. Teachers' emotional engagement was positively predicted by external motivation (β = .097, p < .010) and intrinsic motivation (β = .321, p < .001).

Table 5

Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predictors of Social Engagement with Students

Predictor variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3
Constant	5.848***	5.808***	3.958***
Gender	-.096	-.099	-.038
Students' beg. grad	-.026	-.024	-.017
School level	-.093**	-.090**	-.065*
Teaching experience		.062**	.05**
Lang. proficiency		-.055	-.067**
External motivation			.079**
Introjected motivation			.026
Identified motivation			-.069
Intrinsic motivation			.365***
R^2	.043	.071	.306
F	6.154***	6.184***	19.613***
ΔR^2	.043***	.028**	.235***
ΔF	6.154	6.001	33.890

Note. N = 411, *p < .050; **p < .010; ***p < .001

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A third hierarchical multiple regression was implemented to evaluate the utility of autonomous motivation factors for predicting our teachers' cognitive engagement at work. Assumptions such as normality, linearity, and multi-collinearity were first examined, and no violations were detected. Table 5 presents the results. Demographic information such as gender, school level, students' starting grade (in terms of language learning) were entered in Block 1, which explained 4.300% of the variance in their cognitive engagement. After entering work experience, and language proficiency in Block 2, the total variance explained by the model was 7.100%. In Block 3, where the scales of motivation in the instrument were all entered, the total variance explained by the model was 30.600%. Teachers' social engagement with students was positively predicted by external motivation (β = .079, p < .010) and intrinsic motivation (β = .365, p < .001).

Table 6

Results of Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predictors of Social Engagement with Colleagues

Predictor variables	Regression 1	Regression 2	Regression 3
Constant	5.829***	5.843***	4.485***
Gender	-.077	-.08	-.037
Students' beg. grad	-.012	-.012	-.007
School level	-.094**	-.089**	-.071**
Teaching experience		.045*	.037
Lang. proficiency		-.056*	-.064**
External motivation			.050**
Introjected motivation			.014
Identified motivation			-.033
Intrinsic motivation			.263***
R^2	.0444	.066	.209
F	6.205***	5.687***	11.794***
ΔR^2	.044	.022	.144
ΔF	6.205***	4.739**	18.219***

Note. N = 411, *p < .050; **p < .010; ***p < .001

Lastly, a fourth hierarchical multiple regression was implemented to evaluate the utility of autonomous motivation factors for predicting our teachers' social engagement with colleagues at work. Assumptions such as normality, linearity, and multi-collinearity were first examined, and no violations were detected. Table 6 presents the results. Demographic information such as gender, school level, students' starting grade levels (in terms of language learning) were entered in Block 1, which explained 4.440% of the variance in their cognitive engagement. After entering work experience, and language proficiency in Block 2, the total variance explained by the model was 6.6%. In Block 3, where the scales of motivation in the instrument were all entered, the total variance explained by the model was 20.590%. Teachers' social engagement with colleagues was positively predicted by external motivation (β = .050, p < .010) and intrinsic motivation (β = .263, p < .001).

Discussion

Question 1

According to our descriptive analysis, the teachers were found to be very positively engaged at work in many ways, including cognitively, emotionally, and socially, as theoretically framed by Fredricks et al. (2004). It appeared that the Vietnamese in-service

English teachers working with minority students tended to most positively rate their cognitive engagement (referring to their best attempts to teach, full attention placed on their work, using their wholehearted soul to teach, and willingness to intensely work). The next highest rating was their emotional engagement, which encompasses teachers' positive feelings about teaching (such as excitement, happiness, interests and sources of fun related to teaching activities). It is not surprising that their sense of social engagement with students was the lowest rated due to contextual constraints. Regardless, they gave students unlimited attention and empathy by providing warmth and consideration towards their innate feelings.

Although a minor difference between engagement with students and colleagues, our participants subsumed the success of the teaching profession, accompanied by their strong connection with colleagues through their valued bonds and their care for each other's problems. This finding might be attributed to our teachers' continuously growing sense of caring, responsibility, commitment, and loyalty to themselves and others. Importantly, it may have also resulted from their unlimited support from many other stakeholders inside and out of the schools. Also, they appeared to have higher levels of autonomous motivation (identified and intrinsic motivation) than that of controlled motivation (external and introjected motivation). Specifically, our research participants had very good levels of autonomous motivation, while they were largely affected by external power (such as their superiors and students' parents). The correlational findings (Appendix A) showed that the four forms of motivation were positively valued, ranging from .510 (external and intrinsic motivation) to .774 (identified and intrinsic motivation). These findings reveal an optimistic landscape with regards to the opportunities teachers are offered to exercise autonomy in their work. In fact, they have access to better pay than their mainstream counterparts because the former group exclusively receives financial support from the government. Despite the convenience of financial support, they seem to strictly follow the fixed regulations required by schools and the regional department (or Ministry of Education and Training) for certain K-12 minority populations. It is not very shocking, as we are fully aware of the difficulties and struggles both teachers and learners face amidst under-equipped and under-privileged teaching and learning environments. Furthermore, when we examined the singular relationships between each form of motivation and engagement, they were all slightly-to-moderately positive relationships. To justify why this happened, we explained it using self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste et al., 2004) and analyzed the upward direction between teachers' autonomous motivation and their engagement. To illustrate, the more intrinsically motivated, the more they invested their efforts into work, the more empowered and eager they felt about work, and the more effectively they interacted with their students. This is a common finding seen in many studies, which also appears to be true for teachers working with K-12 minority students.

However, in contrast to the educational landscapes in mainstream settings, we should notice that compared to the mainstream school settings in big cities where teaching and learning resources seem to be sufficient for students, minority students experience a wide range of inadequacies that limit students access to academic needs and extra-curricular activities to fulfill their learning experiences and maximize their potential. The widening differences between K-12 minority and mainstream students, with particular regards to the languages used during their official school hours and their poor access to school experiences due to a number of environmental threats (including national disasters), has certainly resulted in worsening situations. Despite many advantages related to Vietnamese K-12 minority learners' exposure to diverse languages at school, they seemed very disadvantaged to commit to learning goals that over-exceed their possession of language competency. If national legislation permits their mother tongue to be taught as a subject language, Vietnamese seems to be overly dominant in their academic progress during their first grades of primary school (Nguyen & Hamid, 2017).

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This partly covers their unconscious efforts to legitimize their loss of social (including regional, communal, familial, and village-based) privileged identities (Nguyen & Hamid, 2017). Moreover, the discrepancies of first languages among students and teachers have hindered teachers' autonomous motivation to act agentively, although they are intrinsically motivated (Doan, 2004), thus failing to "create identity using language" (Crable, 2010, p. 6). That is why Bui (2018), formerly supported by Hornberger (2005), proposed collaborative work from top-down and bottom-up approaches to help the teachers of minority students overcome their existing challenges. Addressing this language problem cannot be solely accomplished by these teachers or their students. Students deal with inconvenient pathways to school and infrastructure that threatens their safety and lives, which justifies a reason for their prolonged schooling absences and tardiness. In addition to the two noted impacts of top-down policies and bottom-up perspectives, one noticeable insight should be that students perceive knowledge from textbooks as irrelevant. Therefore, despite strenuous attempts to convince their learners to attend school, the results of low engagement are explainable.

Question 2

We found that teacher autonomous motivation and teacher engagement varied according to their demographics. First, although our statistical findings did not reveal any differences between male teachers and female teachers in all forms of teacher engagement. However, because of the unique characteristics regarding teaching K-12 minority students in Vietnam, and our observation that over the years there have been little-to-no formal documents published, we should note the existing phenomena. It is observable that male teachers can tolerate environmental hardships, like natural disasters, and commute to their workplaces far from home. However, we are unsure about many traditional claims that female teachers are more popular among students than their male counterparts who are willing to, and passionate about, work as teachers of K-12 students in Vietnam (Kim & Corcoran, 2018; Weaver-Hightower, 2011). However, despite failing to reveal differences between the two gender groups, it is a promising sign that the disparities between genders in the teaching field, and the strengthening of male teachers' optimism and enthusiasm, has opened more investigations into the disproportionality of gender in the traditionally female-dominant teaching workforce of Vietnam. We are very positive to see the positive effects of diversity in education for the Vietnamese minority groups, which greatly benefits learners to a large extent (Johnson, 2008). To further understand the positive effects of diversity, this should be studied through more qualitative research. Contrarily, school levels may affect teacher engagement, with no involvement of emotional engagement. It can be explained that grade levels can increase or decrease the actualization of students moving-up or dropping-out. As we can conclude from our data, the lower school levels should be more responsible for ensuring the quality of work learners need to be capable of in order to succeed in the higher levels. Very little of our foreground literature can translate into the fact that the more academically sufficient the students entering higher levels of education, the better engaged teachers are because they are more trusted by the school leaders, the regional, and supervisors. Alternatively, if they are able to effectively teach learners content knowledge to navigate the higher levels, they would be given a chance to autonomously and agentively engage to decide their teaching practices based on the new generations of minority learners. However, similar to the educational hardships of Vietnamese K-12 minority learners, especially with no English language use, our participants seemed to necessarily teach with autonomy and freedom to make their teaching more aligned with their learners' needs and future prospects, while following the societal structures.

As for social engagement with both students and colleagues, our findings suggested key differences between the teachers with different teaching experiences and language proficiencies. This finding was expected, because we assumed the role language proficiency has on their social interactions with their English learners in the classrooms (Do & Vu, 2021; Vu, 2021). However, it is a new contribution to the literature for the impact of language proficiency on social engagement with colleagues. While the national policies required the Vietnamese teachers of English to have level C1 contingent on the Common European Framework of Reference, they failed to have desirable levels of proficiency, especially those working in the under-served regions across the country. Extracted from our statistical data, we are confident that our teachers had relatively good proficiency, with more than 90% of our researched teachers achieving at B1 or higher. These levels are sufficient enough to teach K-12 Vietnamese learners of English, especially with groups of minority students who appeared to be lower than expected for their language proficiency at their current level of education.

Gathering these pieces of information, we reiterate the power of collaborative work that was highlighted above (McCarty & Wyman, 2009), which stresses that the language gaps in proficiency between their colleagues and them may be a starting point to mutually motivate each other, not only in their own school contexts but also their regions. Aligned with the strategy of the Department of Education and Training in the location of this study, the English teachers are encouraged to remain socially and ethically active in their many communities of practice to create bonds, disseminate knowledge, and design the regional policies that can better accommodate the needs of their learners. Also, their regular meetings during the academic year invited them to work together in one place, with the hope that their knowledge can be publicly shared, and competition can reinforce their sense of teaching for the sake of sustainability of professional development. Indirectly, we acknowledge that what they earn from the given opportunities may profoundly contribute to their learners' experiences through interactive projects that push their learners out of the comfort zone. Attached to the considerable benefits for their learners, we can also consider the positive results of their emotional engagement, which is connected to their professional knowledge growth and culturally-responsive teaching pedagogies. Following review of this data, we truly believe that these Vietnamese K-12 teachers of minority students succeeded in making their hopes and wishes happen by simply loving to teach their learners and helping them realize their potential, similar to their mainstream peers, regardless of the abundance of externally controlling factors and insufficient personal competencies. Nieto (2006) coined the phrase, teachers need to "teach outside the lines" (p. 476). They sometimes needed to change teaching content that was beyond their reality and primarily written in the official Vietnamese language, failing to help them claim their right to use native languages in class and local knowledge that shapes their identities (Bui, 2014; Nguyen & Hamid, 2017; Tran, 2013; Vu, 2020). Even the challenges they face could make them much prouder to become agents of change towards their learners' attainment of democratic language learning which is assisted and fostered by their utilization of local languages that involve "ethnic beauty, commitment, pride, identity, and respect for their loved ones [and protection of] their traditional knowledge" (Bui, 2014, p. 284).

Shifting to teacher engagement, we also found that Vietnamese teachers proved to be better socially engaged with students if they had more years of employment, which is very understandable. Especially, when working with K-12 minority students, they could have learned from their past experiences to manage culturally responsive solutions for their learners based on their home language and their academic attainment. Meaningfully, we take into account the hidden stories about teacher identity from our Vietnamese teachers of focus. As K-12 teachers of minority students, they are deemed important to take on many different roles which had not been required, such as their spouse to deal with their legal matters (like

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registering their birth certificate), as their principal teacher ("*Giáo Viên Chủ Nhiệm"*) to update their subject teachers on their academic performances, as their parents to receive financial support from (non-)governmental donors because of their ill-educated parents and their low awareness of the importance of education for their children (Tran, 2013). It is important for there to be assistance from the authorities, thus encouraging more attention on the learners' parents, while their attention is believed to be on students' success in various ways (Abukari & Laser, 2013).

Furthermore, the research participants in the primary schools could have enabled better engagement than those in high schools because teachers have to teach all subjects for their assigned class. Therefore, they would have rare challenges in order to get to know their students in the beginning, adapt their teaching practices more frequently during the school year, and have more time to work closely with their students depending on their personal schedules. Vietnamese K-12 minority students often have parents that are inferiorly engaged in their studies, live in poverty, and live a far distance away from school (Tran, 2013; Trieu & Jayakody, 2018), they might be have drastically fluctuating motivation to work, so the teachers at this school level have more preferred choice of autonomy and relevance. For example, they may consider including constructivist learning to motivate their young learners, by creating interactive environments with games for instance. However, for those working with the lower/upper-secondary schools in disadvantaged areas, teachers might consider themselves as controlling teachers to some extent because they have more pressure from the school leaders to ensure the highest high-stake test outcomes or competition with their peers/colleagues. Therefore, they need to pay more attention to their students' grades and languages to communicate with their students to yield their utmost efforts (Reeve & Jang, 2006).

Question 3

All forms of engagement were correlated with external and intrinsic motivation, not introjected and identified motivation. Basically, these positively correlated types of autonomous motivation with teacher engagement fell into the two ends of the continuum, showing that our K-12 teachers seemed to be purely regarded as controlled or autonomously motivated when closely working with minority students. This reality is reflective of the true needs of these K-12 teachers with their involvement with other parties in developing their teaching in response to social needs. As we discussed very clearly above, minority students are very unique in terms of academic learning with special needs, their first language being very different from that of mainstream students, their access to school accompanied by threats to their well-being, and their limited educated parents, we are quite certain to refer to the teachers' efforts as not only caring about their students learning successes, but also their families to challenge the current perspectives so that the new educational outcomes can be reached and their learners' future lives can be brighter.

As the power of collaboration has suggested, we acknowledge the hands of many parties are needed to make the reality better and more positive than before. Cognitive engagement primarily involves their devotion and time invested into work, which can be fully/partially supported by their leaders/parents and their own sense of importance. They need to learn much more than ever to make a concerted effort to help their learners overcome academic challenges and personal issues to truly see the meaning of learning. As we also pointed out, teachers should find out how their local languages can be incorporated into their teaching materials to make their learners feel that their voices are heard and their futures are taken into close consideration, as an effort to maintain the values of education in general. From our perspectives, which are supported by empirical studies, cognitive engagement also requires

teachers to develop critical and essential knowledge that refers to their abilities to teach life skills in addition to their English subjective knowledge that increases their learners' well-being and life satisfaction.

However, cognitive engagement cannot be detached from increased emotional engagement. Unarguably, if teachers do not love teaching and working with linguistically and culturally threatened learner populations (Martin & Stuart-Smith, 1998), they cannot be fully willing to accept that they will face many social difficulties in their school contexts before making positive contributions to their learners. More importantly, minority learner populations are usually victimized as "backward, superstitious, and conservative…[and subjects of] lower levels of development and civilization" (Nguyen & Hamid, 2017, p. 143). Therefore, it may be argued that not only do they need to love teaching, they need to find sources of positive motivation and excitement about their learners, their culturally-responsive teaching practices, and their resilience when faced with inadequacies of teaching materials to keep themselves engaged with the struggles of their learners to fully understand their problems, feel empathy towards their concerns, and responsibly find solutions for their learners when they lack parental support and education. These admired K-12 teachers should feel good when they have their leaders' support, advice, and consultation, but with their fully-granted sense of autonomy they can make decisions on what is effective and appropriate for their classrooms and their learners' competencies. Cognitive and emotional engagement are also coincidentally aligned with their social engagement with students, not only within their teaching settings but also their life scenarios. As their K-12 minority students constitute the most engendered groups (Trieu & Jayakody, 2019), these teachers decidedly, eagerly and willingly take more roles in supporting their learners and parents in an effort to drag themselves out of the population of hidden discrimination (Nguyen & Hamid, 2017) and subsequently shape their life in a brighter manner.

Conclusion and Implications

From our study, we can draw some important theoretical and practical implications that can benefit different parties within Vietnamese education. Since we focused on exploring Vietnamese in-service English teachers of K-12 minority students in a certain part of the country, we now know that there is a positive picture to show that we can reconsider the roles of the teaching population serving linguistically and culturally under-served student populations in the mountainous areas. It is clear that we are no longer worried about the quality of our researched teachers in terms of their professional behaviors generally, and their teaching practices particularly. Our statistical findings showed very good levels of their autonomous motivation and their four forms of engagement. Although there exists a gap among the four forms of autonomous motivation, we can see teachers' positively self-rated levels of autonomous motivation, especially at the two ends of the continuum, which are very closely connected to their self-reflected engagement.

Despite no effects between the two types of autonomous motivation in the middle of the continuum, we can see that they still believed in themselves as qualified and critical agents of change in response to the drastically changing sociocultural global scenarios (Vu et al., 2022, a, 2022b). Also, we consider that what needs to be significantly changed is related to what the students need to learn and develop, whilst their chances of learning are not more than ever. However, the relevant policy makers and curriculum writers should replace "one-size-fits-all" strategies by using socially inclusive teaching (DeJaerghere et al., 2021) and they need to closely attend to the cultural contexts of the minority student populations (UNESCO, 2017). In response, their learning would become more meaningfully engaged and inter-connected with their surrounding life towards the closure of gaps between mainstream and minority students

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(Vu & Nguyen, 2022). Their safety and health concerns should be examined for this certain population, we found that the very dangers facing them impact their access to schooling. It is most needed for each Vietnamese citizen, regardless of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, to have safe access to education (Vu & Do, 2021; Vu, 2021).

Lastly, as we examined the diversity of our researched teachers in terms of gender, we find that diverse teacher populations can benefit their students and the societies around them. However, more suitable policies should be published to attract more Vietnamese teachers to work and teach the variety of K-12 minority groups of students in different parts of the country, so that these populations can yield equal rights and fairness to make use of educational opportunities for better futures. In addition, more training and professional development programs for the pre-service and in-service English teachers should also be sufficiently provided, so that their teaching practices can be well suited for their classrooms (Vu et al., 2022a, 2022b). Normally, the roles of teachers are always important, and are symbolized as the most-respected people in the country, like our Vietnamese traditional saying that *without teachers, you won't succeed*. Thus, we advocate that their efforts should be better recognized and better paid attention to in order to avoid their tendencies to give up because of low pay and prestige, or to avoid their choice of doubling their employment to make a sufficient living. The teachers of minority students are very brave people who accept to stay far from their family due to inconvenient transportation and environmental hardships. Therefore, to compensate for their hard work and determination, they need to be well cared for both physically and mentally, so that they can feel satisfied with their career choices and have sustainable teaching careers.

Because we concentrated on the quantitative data from a mass sample, we are unsure about how to better unfold their realities, so we welcome further studies to take advantage of their stories and their teaching artifacts from their schools and classrooms. Moreover, our consideration also lies in the needs of examining the students' voices about their hardships, which may facilitate or hinder their teachers' autonomous motivation and engagement. It is because our country has more than 54 groups of people, with 53 being minority groups, our future research should attend to other groups to acquire a fuller understanding. More importantly, further qualitative research should add to our comprehensive knowledge about the topic, either confirming or contrasting our study's findings. Considering all the directions, we hope to make Vietnamese education for minority groups, and for teachers of those groups, more complete and more engaging. Especially for teacher educators in Vietnam in particular and Asia in general, it would be important that more empirical, based on theoretical constructs and conceptual grounds, research should be available to help them explore research-centered principles and pedagogical strategies in order to make their teaching inclusive and equitable. As research on teachers of minority groups is relatively sensitive, there should be careful approaches to help them feel secure to share their stories and exchange their thinking so that research and practice turn to be aligned in a wide range of sociocultural contexts.

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Duc An Nguyen is a lecturer at Tay Bac University. She has a wide range of teaching expertise regarding many levels and educational settings. Her research interests are related to TESOL and Applied Linguistics, Educational Technology, and English Language Education for ethnic minority groups.

Appendix A
Correlation

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
External motivation	1												
Introjected motivation	.548**	1											
Identified motivation	.516**	.733**	1										
Intrinsic motivation	.510**	.720**	.774**	1									
Social engagement with colleagues	.284**	.302**	.294**	.388**	1								
Emotional engagement	.327**	.308**	.305**	.411**	.552**	1							
Cognitive engagement	.308**	.363**	.353**	.457**	.562**	.708**	1						
Social engagement with students	.365**	.380**	.365**	.489**	.604**	.614**	.681**	1					
Gender	-0.089	-.110*	-0.075	-.101*	-0.076	-0.049	-0.041	-0.086	1				
Work experience	0.092	0.003	0.026	0.031	0.093	0.064	0.062	.125*	-0.009	1			
Language proficiency	-0.01	0.039	0.019	0.033	-.130**	-0.043	-0.035	-.120*	-0.037	0.015	1		
Students' starting year of English learning	-0.082	-0.016	-0.027	-0.039	-.097*	-0.062	-0.088	-.107*	-0.074	-0.015	0.027	1	
School level	-0.091	-.099*	-0.022	-0.074	-.196**	-.108*	-.152**	-.189**	0.025	0.08	.177**	.453**	1

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Appendix B
Descriptive Analysis

	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Cronbach's Alpha**
Cognitive engagement (CE)	***5.563***	***.397***	***.757***
I try my hardest to perform well while teaching;	5.813	.391	
While teaching, I really "throw" myself into my work.	5.246	.637	
While teaching, I pay a lot of attention to my work.	5.601	.524	
While teaching, I work with intensity.	5.591	.507	
Affective engagement (AE)	***5.549***	***.428***	***.827***
I am excited about teaching.	5.616	.487	
I feel happy while teaching;	5.521	.560	
I love teaching.	5.608	.513	
I find teaching fun.	5.450	.549	
Social engagement with students (SEwS)	***5.448***	***.422***	***.777***
In class, I show warmth to my students.	5.676	.484	
In class, I am aware of my students' feelings.	5.207	.566	
In class, I care about the problems of my students.	5.467	.559	
In class, I am empathetic towards my students.	5.440	.566	
Social engagement with colleagues (SEwC)	***5.492***	***.391***	***.663***
At school, I connect well with my colleagues.	5.771	.421	
At school, I am committed to helping my colleagues.	5.409	.587	
At school, I value the relationships I built with my colleagues.	5.718	.461	
At school, I care about the problems of my colleagues.	5.071	.704	

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Appendix C

The ethical approval

ETHICAL APRROVAL FOR RESEARCH

I, Tay Bac University Rector, have been given information about the research entitled *"Minority Students' Experiences are Part of Our Life of Teaching": Hierarchical Multiple Regressions of Vietnamese Teacher Motivation and Teacher Engagement* (research ID: TB 2021-15) and discussed the research aims, content, methodology, data analysis and procedure with Nguyen Duc An and Vu Ngoc Tung who are conducting this research in Northwest Vietnam. Nguyen Duc An has been working at Tay Bac University since 2008 and she is the liaison between Vu Ngoc Tung and Tay University during this research.

I understand that English teachers in Northwest Vietnam will participate in a survey conducted in summer 2021 and their contribution will be confidential and that there is no identification in the data to be used in the study. Their research is about the ethnic minorities, therefore, Tay Bac University closely monitor the reseachers' work during their data collection to ensure that there are no physical and mental risks or burdens on the research participants associated with this study, their participation in this research is voluntary, they may withdraw at any time from the study without affecting any treatments at their working schools in any way, and the data are shared transparently and honestly.

The research timeline is as followings:

No.	Activity	Proposed time
1	Proposal	March - April 2021
2	Data collection	May - June 2021
3	Data analysis	July 2021
4	Oral data presentation	July 2021
5	Manuscript preparation	August - September 2021
6	Final submission	September 2021

I can be contacted via Tay Bac University's research committee, Quyet Tam Ward, Son La City, Son La Province, Vietnam on +84986726767 or email tamdt@utb.edu.vn.

On the behalf of the university research committee, I approve their research proposal and conducting.

Signed Date: 16 May 2021

Name: Dr. Dinh Thanh Tam, Tay Bac University Rector