

'What Motivated Them to Become Teachers?' An Examination of Trainee Teachers' Motives of Training as Teachers

¹Maphosa, C.

²Bhebhe, S.

¹Shumba, J.

¹ University of Fort Hare, South Africa

² University of Venda, South Africa

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Abstract

The reasons why people choose different professions are varied, multifaceted and often controversial. The present study sought to establish trainee teachers' motivating reasons to train as teachers. A mixed method research paradigm was employed and a case study design was utilised. A convenient sample of seventy trainee teachers in one teacher training college in Zimbabwe participated in the study. Data were collected through a semi structured questionnaire. Quantitative data were analysed statistically with aid of SPSS version 21 statistical software. Qualitative data were analysed through thematic content analysis. Among the major findings were that trainee teachers chose to train as teachers owing to perceived personal attributes consistent with the teaching job, had influence from some close friends and relatives and also had some anticipated positive results associated with being a qualified teacher. The study concludes that there were multiple and multi-faceted factors that influenced trainee teachers to train as teachers and these are personal and environmental factors. Recommendations were made.

Keywords: Teacher training. Motivating factors. Teaching profession. Trainee teachers.

1. Introduction

Choosing a career is often a very difficult task for many school leavers (Padaguri, 2011). There are a myriad of factors that make coming up with a decision on career problematic. Padaguri (2011: 1) equates the challenge of making career choices to walking on a tight rope bating that:

Making career decisions can be like a walk on the tight-rope due to lack of experience and multiple, conflicting sources of information. Proper career planning isn't easy and involves a lot of thought and right execution of ideas and decisions.

It is clear from the above observation that making decisions about career choices is difficult. Challenges in career planning may also result in people settling for careers that they never planned for.

Padaguri (2011) establishes from different case studies that some of the factors considered in settling for particular professions include job security, opinions of family, friends and experts in the area as well as salary package and perks offered. In choosing to train as a teacher, for example, one may be influenced by role models already in the field or perceived job security.

Young people are also generally influenced by parents in settling for certain careers. Beyer (2008: 306) observes that:

Parental aspirations and expectations affect the self-efficacy of their children and are important role models. Parental support is a key factor in women's decisions regarding science, women are most greatly affected by verbal persuasions active mentoring.

Decisions for career choices, therefore, do not come from individual preferences only but are entangled in environmental influences. Relationships with people already in careers may influence individuals to choose certain careers.

2. Holland's Theory of Career Choice

Bullock, Andrews, Braud and Reardon (2009) posit that Holland's Theory of Career choice is premised on the following four assumptions: that people can be categorized into Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising and Conventional (RIASEC) types of personality; that environments are also classified into the same six categories; that people tend to align themselves to environments that suit their personality; and that an individual's personality should be congruent with the environment. Hence, people tend to choose careers that fit their personality. RIASEC are basic types of personal orientations toward work (Athanasou, & Van Eisbroeck, 2008; Yeung, 2005). Characteristics of the people who fall under the various Realistic domain include love for physical activities, need to see tangible results, enjoying working with hands, tools, equipment and preference for solitary work. Those in the Investigative domain are aligned to abstract thinking, problem-solving, working with science, mathematics and ideas and also prefer solitary work. The Artistic domain comprise of people who work with art, music and who like to entertain whereas those in the Social domain are inclined towards teaching, counselling, helping others, working face to face with people and are well endowed in verbal skills. Individuals in the Enterprising group have high value on influencing others, for example, using persuasion, managing and leading people to attain goals such as selling. People in the Conventional type of personality are orderly, work with data, numbers and systematically keep records (Jones, 2014). The attributes can be linked to various subject specialisation choices by teachers.

The theory implies that people prefer and choose environments in which they can use their skills, abilities and express their values and attitudes, that is, environments congruent to their personalities. Thus, how people act and feel at work depends on the fit between type of personality and type of environment. The six RIASEC types or the six Holland interest typologies are arranged in a hexagon in the order of RIASEC, and the relationship between the types in terms of similarities and dissimilarities are portrayed by the distance between corresponding types in the hexagon (Jones, 2014). For example, R and I are in close proximity on the hexagon; hence, these are more alike than S and R that are opposite. However, the applicability of this theory has been critiqued and other factors that may affect choice of career have been revealed such as, high unemployment, socioeconomic factors, collectivist cultures, school-to-work transition, agrarian economy and utilitarian values (Long, Adams & Tracey, 2005). Furthermore, Holland's theory was based on the United States of America's context and does not take into account the diversity of cultures (Bullock et al, 2009). As such, the theory may not be congruent to this current study's context.

3. The Teaching Profession

Teaching is a very important profession as it entails the shaping of children's future. The evidence shows us that the quality of teaching has the largest impact on student learning outcomes, other than a student's socioeconomic background (Hattie, 2003; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization [UNESCO], 2006). To this end, people attracted to the teaching profession should be generally the right calibre of people who are not only willing to assist learners but are appropriate role models for learners. In view of the importance of attracting the right people to the teaching profession, the State of Victoria in Australia as stated in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (2013:9) points out that:

Teaching is a career of choice for talented people with the skills and attributes that make for great teachers. There are attractive pathways and incentives for top graduates and professionals from a range of disciplines and backgrounds.

Of importance is the need to have a teaching profession that attracts great minds who also have a predisposition to work with young learners. To this end, teaching should not be taken as a career for those who cannot be accommodated in other careers. It is a danger to have people who become teachers by default.

The teaching profession needs to be competitive with other occupations in attracting talented and motivated people. Such a view is shared by OECD (2011) which states that education systems, the world over, have a problem in recruiting high-quality graduates as teachers.

4. Important Attributes of a Teacher

It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to produce the desired attributes of a teacher. A number of authorities have come up with a list of characteristics that they thought would constitute attributes of a good teacher. According to the Tribune Media Services (2013:1) "Unless you have an open mind, a good sense of humour, patience and excellent

people skills, teaching may not be your calling." There are qualities expected and vital for a teacher to possess so as to effectively perform the set tasks in schools.

Kidwell (2013:1) states that a teacher should be able to; create learning environments where students are active participants as individuals and as members of collaborative groups, motivate students and nurtures their desire to learn in a safe, healthy and supportive environment which develops compassion and mutual respect, cultivates cross cultural understandings and the value of diversity, encourages students to accept responsibility for their own learning and accommodates the diverse learning needs of all students, displays effective and efficient classroom management that includes classroom routines that promote comfort, order and appropriate student behaviours, provides students equitable access to technology, space, tools and time, effectively allocates time for students to engage in hands-on experiences, discuss and process content and make meaningful connections, design lessons that allow students to participate in empowering activities in which they understand that learning is a process and mistakes are a natural part of learning and create an environment where student work is valued, appreciated and used as a learning tool.

Coombe and Barlow (2009:1) also have their own way of describing the important attributes of a teacher as they mentioned that a teacher should have a 'calling' for the profession, possess appropriate professional knowledge, appreciable personal qualities, desired instructional effectiveness, be a good communicator, be street smart, willing to go the extra mile, be a lifelong learner and have excellent life outside the classroom.

Azer (2005) also shared some attributes of a good teacher as one committed to the work, encourages and appreciates diversity, interacts and communicates respect, motivates students and co-workers, brings a wide range of skills and talents to teaching, demonstrates leadership in teaching, encourages an open and trusting learning environment, fosters critical thinking, encourages creative work, emphasizes teamwork, seeks continually to improve teaching skills and provides positive feedback.

Different views on the important attributes of a teacher have been suggested by different authorities. Communities and schools have different needs, therefore it is important for a teacher to adjust to the desired characteristics in order to fit into their school environment.

5. What Attracts People to Join a Profession in General and Teaching Profession in Particular?

Various professions are faced with a major task of attracting and retaining skilled and professional personnel. Teachers constitute a major national labour force, hence the need to attract and ensure they are retained in the teaching profession. The reasons that influence the career choice of individuals at different ages vary. However, most of the reasons that influence teachers to stay in the teaching profession are common to all ages.

A Practitioner's Guide (2004) states that the availability of affordable and descent accommodation is one aspect that attracts professionals of all ages to a profession. Teachers would always want to work in schools where there would be reasonably priced or free and comfortable accommodation where they would even afford to live with their families.

Rational working hours is another factor that attracts people to join a profession. Gyes (2010:2) states that, "Teachers have more regular working hours than other workers. This allows for a smoother reconciliation of work and family life". When an individual can balance work and family they get the satisfaction desired in a profession.

Remunerations offered by different kinds of professions may attract people to a particular occupation. Brinks (2013) reflects that it is attractive salaries that the state or school is offering that attracts teachers to their profession. Schools offering good salaries attract more skilled and competent personnel.

Individuals in the society are also attracted to professions that promote and encourage professional development. According to Hartshorn, Hextall, Howell, Menter and Smyth (2005:14) teachers want to work in schools where they get "...the opportunity to upgrade qualifications, achieve new qualifications and generally improve their professional knowledge and understanding". Teachers are also attracted to the teaching profession by the fact that the teaching profession allows for their professional development. Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005:1) adds to the factors that,

...teachers' decisions to remain in their schools and in teaching are influenced by a combination of the intrinsic and extrinsic rewards that they receive in their work. Intrinsic rewards include such things as the pleasure of being with children, the exhilaration of contributing to students' learning, the enjoyment of teaching subject matter one loves, or the chance to develop new skills and exercise expanded influence on the job. Extrinsic rewards would include salary, benefits, and bonuses, public recognition for one's accomplishments, or being chosen to take on special responsibilities.

Intrinsic and extrinsic factors are important for the satisfaction of the teacher in their profession. Factors such as having a classroom that is well lighted, effectively ventilated, and temperature-controlled or knowing that the parking lot is

safe enough to allow working late are also what teachers consider when seeking for employment at a certain school (Johnson, Berg and Donaldson 2005:1). In different professions individuals have various expectations and preference for their work and work place such that what one is satisfied with may be inadequate for another.

A study by Knott (2009) revealed the following as some of the reasons why Mathematics teachers enter and remain in the profession: they are motivated by the need to help others who are in the same predicament as themselves; because of limited career choices for them as African Americans at the time: they wanted to make a difference in the lives of children; they were inspired by a high school teacher; because they always knew they wanted to be teachers. Attractions into careers are therefore varied. The researchers see a relationship to some of the RIASEC domains. For example, the need to help others and making a difference in the lives of children are aligned to the social domain in Holland's theory of Career choice. Those who always wanted to become teachers were in synchrony with SCCT's tenet of personal goals.

6. Theoretical Framework

The present study is underpinned by the Social Career Cognitive Theory (SCCT). The SCCT draws from Bandura's social cognitive theory. The social cognitive theory explains how people acquire and maintain certain behavioural patterns, while also providing the basis for intervention strategies (Bandura, 1997). The SCCT states that the environment refers to the factors that can affect a person's behaviour. In this regard, environment could refer to the social and physical. Social environment may include family members, friends and colleagues, as individuals who influence career decisions in a fairly positive way. Physical environment may be referred to in terms of physical space or infrastructure. According to Parraga (1990) environment and situation provide the framework for understanding behaviour. Situation is understood in terms of cognitive or mental representations of the environment that may affect a person's behaviour (Glanz et al, 2002). Glanz et al, (2002) further observe that factors related to environment, people and behaviour do influence each other hence one's behaviour is not just a consequence of the environment and the person and the environment is not only the result of the person and behaviour. The interplay of these factors is important and is considered in decision taken regarding career choice as well.

The main tenets of SCCT, according to Lent et al (1994), are self-efficacy, outcome expectations, and goals. Self-efficacy refers to the beliefs people have about their ability to successfully perform certain tasks related to a career or a vocation. Normally these are perceived strengths that are derived from personal performance and social interactions (Pajares & Schunk, 2001). An example could be instances where one perceives himself or herself to be strong and brave and then decides to train as a soldier or as patient and caring and decides to train as a nurse. An individual would be in a way making self-evaluation in terms conduct, behaviour and physical disposition.

Outcome expectations are another important element of the SCCT. Outcome expectations are the beliefs related to the results of performing a specific behavior. In joining a profession, for example, one would be influenced by certain expected positive results or gains that emanate from their participation in the profession. Goals, on the other hand, **are** an important element of ACCT as one's decision to choose a career is based on what they hope to achieve by having such a career. Clear career goals are made possible by a deep understanding of what the career is all about as well as sustained interest in the career.

In SCCT, career interests are regulated by self-efficacy and an outcome expectation, which means people, will form long-lasting interests in undertakings when they experience personal competency and positive outcomes. An individual should have self-belief and this is tied to positive expectations and results in exerting all energies to achieve what is desired. Conversely, a belief of low personal competency will lead people to avoid activities. Perceived hindrances such as those related to gender, ethnicity, age, socioeconomic status, or family constraints may create negative outcome expectations and one may be deterred from pursuing a career.

7. Research Objective

The main objective of the study was to establish factors that motivated trainee teachers to train as teachers in a selected teacher training institution in Zimbabwe.

8. Research Methodology

This section discusses research methodology. Rajasekar, Philominathan and Chinnathambi (2013: 5) state that research methodology is:

... a systematic way to solve a problem. It is a science of studying how research is to be carried out. Essentially, the procedures by which researchers go about their work of describing, explaining and predicting phenomena are called research methodology.

In this section, the researchers describe and justify the research procedures by attending to research paradigm, research design, population and sampling, instrumentation, data analysis and ethical issues.

9. Research Approach

The study adopted a mixed methods approach in which both quantitative and qualitative methodologies were utilised. In mixed methods research, both quantitative and qualitative data is collected and analysed in a single study to understand a research problem (Creswell, 2008). Stange et al (2006: 293) states that a mixed method approach entails:

... integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to generating new knowledge and can involve either concurrent or sequential use of these two classes of methods to follow a line of inquiry.

The mixed methods was considered more appropriate as collecting both quantitative and qualitative data provided a better understanding of the research problem than making use of a single approach.

10. Research Design

A case study design was utilised for this study. Bromley (1990:302) cited in Zucker (2009) posits a case study design entails a "systematic inquiry into an event or a set of related events which aims to describe and explain the phenomenon of interest." The present study sought to establish what motivated trainee teachers as teachers by drawing participants from one teacher training institution in Zimbabwe.

11. Research Participants

Data were collected from a convenience sample of seventy trainee teachers. Convenient sampling is a non-probability type of a sample that targets participants on availability. The present study targeted available trainee teachers in order to establish their views in line with the main purpose of the study.

12. Data Collection Instrument

In collecting data for the data the researchers employed a semi-structured questionnaire. This type of questionnaire enables respondents to provide open ended responses. Patton (1990: 24) states that:

The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories.

In line with the mixed methods thrust of the study, qualitative data were solicited from respondents.

13. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analysed statistically with the aid of Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21. Data were presented in frequencies and percentages. Qualitative data from open ended sections of the questionnaire were analysed through content analysis and verbatim quotations were presented to supports respondents' claims.

14. Validity and Reliability

There were two measures which were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of data collection instruments. A pilot test was conducted to ascertain the usability of the questionnaire before it was administered. Feedback from the pilot test was used to improve the instrument. An expert in teacher training was also requested to comment on the questionnaire items and this also assisted in improving the questionnaire.

15. Ethical Issues

The researchers attended to aspects of ethical considerations such as informed consent, voluntary participation and withdrawal as well as confidentiality. The researchers explained the purpose of the study to the participants before they completed informed consent forms which stated explicitly that participation was voluntary and participants could withdraw from the study for any reason and any stage. Data collected was for academic purposes and would be kept confidentially and anonymity was guaranteed.

16. Results

Results were analysed in line with the Social Cognitive Career Theory theoretical framework under three main themes self-efficacy, outcome expectations, goals and environmental influences.

Table 1: Self-efficacy related factors

Reason/ extent of agreement	SA 5		A 4		U 3		D 2		SD 1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I enjoy working with children	42	60.0	24	34.3	3	4.3	0	0	1	1.4
I want to make a change in children's lives	44	62.9	21	30.0	4	5.7	0	0	1	1.4
I want to be a role model to learners	41	58.6	11	15.7	14	20.0	4	5.7	0	0
I need to advance quality education in the country	49	70.0	12	17.1	7	10.0	2	2.9	0	0
Teaching is a stepping stone for other profession	44	62.9	14	20.0	8	11.4	1	1.4	3	4.3
It is easier to advance myself in education from teaching field than in other professions	37	52.9	16	22.9	13	18.6	3	4.3	1	1.4
I love weekends and school holidays	33	47.1	10	14.3	12	17.1	9	12.9	6	8.6

It is clear from Table 1 that respondents were generally agreeable and they possessed certain qualities that made it possible for them to train as teachers. This is evidenced by 94.3% of the respondents who indicated that they enjoyed working with children, 92.9% who confirmed that they wanted to change children's lives and 74.3% who confirmed that they wanted to be role models for learners.

Qualitative comments below further show how respondents revealed that they had certain qualities which motivated them to train as teachers:

- I enjoy playing with kids (Respondent 22).*
- I am happy to work with children (Respondent 13).*
- I like sports and working with children (Respondent 27).*
- I enjoy playing with children during sports (Respondent 54).*

It is clear that respondents indicated that their decisions to train as teachers were influenced by certain traits they deemed to possess which were consistent with the teaching profession.

Table 2: Outcome expectations related factors

Reason/ extent of agreement	SA 5		A 4		U 3		D 2		SD 1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Teaching is a good job	24	34.3	20	28.6	8	11.4	9	12.9	9	12.9
It is easy to get a job after training	25	35.7	15	21.4	9	12.9	7	10.0	14	20.0
There is job security after training	33	47.1	18	25.7	11	15.7	5	7.1	3	4.3
Teachers are respected in society	28	40.0	12	17.1	10	14.3	8	11.4	12	17.1
I will be able to earn a salary	26	37.1	23	32.9	12	17.1	4	5.7	5	7.1

Results in Table 2 show factors that influenced trainee teachers to train as teachers which were related to expected results after training to be teachers. This is evidenced by 62.9% who confirmed that teaching was a good job, 57.1% who

indicated that it was easy to get a job after training, 72.8% who were agreeable that there were guaranteed of job security after training and 70% who indicated that they would be able to earn a salary after training.

Qualitative comments from the respondents further revealed the anticipated results as a motivation for becoming teachers as evidenced by the following excerpts:

The economic meltdown of the first part of the year 2000 made me realise that it was important to have a job with qualifications (Respondent 1).

Teachers have paid weekends and holidays (Respondent 11).

Working with pupils is a very interesting factor in life (Respondent 23).

Incentives are available at some schools (Respondent 39).

Such excerpts confirm that one does not only join a profession but laden in the decision are anticipations in terms of intended benefits.

Table 3: Goal related factors

Reason/ extent of agreement	SA 5		A 4		U 3		D 2		SD 1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I need to advance quality education in the country	49	70.0	12	17.1	7	10.0	2	2.9	0	0
Teaching is a stepping stone for other profession	44	62.9	14	20.0	8	11.4	1	1.4	3	4.3
It is easier to advance myself in education from teaching field than in other professions	37	52.9	16	22.9	13	18.6	3	4.3	1	1.4

Table 3 shows how respondents had certain goals that motivated their decisions to train as teachers. This is evidenced by 87.1% of the respondents who indicated that they trained as teachers because of a desire to advance quality education, 82.9% who confirmed that teaching was a stepping stone for other careers and 75.8% who indicated that it was easier to advance one's self in the teaching profession than in other professions.

Qualitative comments on this theme further buttress results of goal-oriented motives in training to be teachers as shown by the following excerpts:

Teaching is a good profession. (Respondent 17)

Soon after training one is assured of a job (Respondent 33).

I would like to head a school one day. (Respondent 8)

The above comments serve to show that individual goals and aspirations motivate an individual to join a particular profession.

Table 4: Environmental Influence related factors

Reason/ extent of agreement	SA 5		A 4		U 3		D 2		SD 1	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
One of my relatives/friends is a teacher	25	35.7	17	24.3	8	11.4	9	12.9	11	15.7
I just needed to train in some profession	24	34.3	13	18.6	12	17.1	13	18.6	8	11.4
I had no other option	11	15.7	10	14.3	7	10.0	17	24.3	25	35.7
My parents/spouse/friend influenced me to train as a teacher	6	8.6	3	4.3	14	20.0	15	21.4	32	45.7
Teachers are respected in society	28	40.0	12	17.1	10	14.3	8	11.4	12	17.1

Results in Table 4 show that some factors influencing individuals' decisions to train as teachers were environmental in nature. This is evidenced by 60% of the respondents who indicated that they were motivated to train as teachers by relatives or friends who were teachers. However, only 12.9% of the respondents confirmed that they were influenced by parents and spouses, suggesting that even without environmental influences, people can still make independent decisions to join professions

The following qualitative comments also show environmental influence, and even lack of it, in respondents' decisions to train as teachers:

Teachers are respected members of the communities (Respondent 10).
My father is a teacher so I also wanted to be teacher (Respondent 48).
Teaching is a noble profession (Respondent 55).
I was not influenced by anyone to train as a teacher (Respondent 3).

It is clear that environmental influences may or may not play a contributory role in motivating individuals to train as teachers

17. Discussion

It emerged for the study that respondents possessed certain traits and competencies that motivated them to train as teachers. Such traits and competencies were deemed consistent with expected qualities of a teacher. Such a finding is consistent with key tenets of the Social Cognitive Career Theory. Lent et al. (1994) states that the beliefs people have about their competencies influence them to take up a career in line with such beliefs about the held competencies. It is such belief that will spur individuals to continue with programmes of study despite challenges.

The study also established that in line with self-efficacy factors, respondents desired to be role models to learner. This finding is consistent with views by Coombe and Barlow (2009) that for teachers to be effective role models for learners in every respect, teaching should be a 'calling' rather than merely a job. This calls for teachers exhibiting expected professional values and qualities in order to influence learners positively in both the overt and the covert (hidden) curriculum.

It was established from the study that teachers are also motivated to join the teaching profession by intrinsic rewards. In line with this finding Hartshorn, Hextall, Howell, Menter and Smyth (2005) reflect that the desire and the opportunities available for professional growth in the education sector motivate individuals to join the teaching profession to develop new skills and influence their job promotions.

The study also unveiled that individuals joined the teaching profession for extrinsic rewards. Aligned to this finding Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005) reveal that extrinsic rewards that influence individuals to join the teaching profession include salary, benefits, incentives and bonuses. This means that trainee teachers were motivated by having their performances in the profession recognised and rewarded.

It again emerged from the study that environmental factors may or may not influence teachers to join the teaching profession. Contrary to this view Johnson, Berg and Donaldson (2005) reveal the fact that environmental factors motivated teachers to join the teaching profession, and the environmental factors that influenced teachers to join the teaching profession were to do with effective security in their working places.

It further emerged from the study that individual goals and aspirations motivated an individual to join a particular profession. Individuals would have set it as their goal in life that they wanted to be teachers, thus they joined the profession to fulfill their dreams. In line with this finding Lent et al (1994) declares that goals are decisions to begin a particular activity or future plan and that behavior is organized or sustained based on these previously set goals.

18. Conclusions

In line with the findings of the study, the researchers concludes that there were multiple and multi-faceted factors that influenced individuals' decisions to train as teachers. These ranged from personal factors related to perceived abilities consistent with requirements for being a teacher, expected anticipated results after joining a profession as well as external influences.

19. Recommendations

Against the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

- Career counselling should be an important part of the school curriculum in order for students to make informed choices on careers to join.
- Teacher training college should develop models that assist in recruiting students to ensure appropriate candidates with dispositions towards teaching are recruited.
- Conditions of service in the teaching profession should be made more attractive for the profession to attract the best calibre of candidates to train as teachers.

- Teacher training curricula should be designed in such a way that they ensure development of a well-rounded teacher with appropriate knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in teaching.
- An entry questionnaire on why trainee teachers chose to join the teaching profession is very important as it provides college authorities with useful insights on the nature of students they would be training.

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