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Who wants to become a teacher? Typology of student-teachers' commitment to teaching

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ABSTRACT

Understanding student-teachers' decisions to enter and stay in the teaching profession after graduation could help teacher educators to find appropriate procedures to enhance commitment to teaching. This study classified student-teachers based on their levels of commitment to teaching, and described these types based on student-teachers' motivation to enter the teaching profession and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects e.g. school condition and significant others. Thirty-seven undergraduate student-teachers from the Dar es salaam University College of Education in Tanzania were interviewed. Four student-teacher types from our results were identified: (1) committed passionate, (2) committed compromisers, (3) undecided and (4) uncommitted. Implications from the findings include the importance of designing teacher education curriculum in a way that caters for the needs of student-teachers in each type in order to enhance their commitment to teaching.

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Student-teachers; teacher commitment; motivation; types

Introduction

Teacher shortage is a challenge facing both developed and developing countries. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2005, 2014) reports a serious teacher shortage in many countries, due to a failure both to recruit and retain a sufficient number of teachers. Studies report high teacher attrition (DeAngelis and Presley 2011; Ingersoll and Smith 2003; OECD 2014) and teacher shortage (Cooper and Alvarado 2006; Mulkeen, Chapman, and DeJueghere 2007; Mulkeen and Crowe-Taft 2010) in both developed and developing countries. In the latter, attempts to increase access to schooling and a growth in the number of school-aged children has outpaced the growth in the number of teachers in most countries, resulting in a serious shortage of teachers (Cooper and Alvarado 2006).

Tanzania, which provides the context of this study, also experiences a serious teacher shortage. In an attempt to solve this problem, the Tanzanian government focused on increased training and recruitment of teachers. An institution coordinating loans for students in higher education in Tanzania, the Higher Education Students' Loan Board (HESLB) gave

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priority to students enrolling in teacher education. Additionally, the government has offered direct employment to graduates of teacher education programmes. Consequently, teaching has become the most reliable formal sector employment for graduates in the country, and these recruitment practices have led to more students entering teacher education programmes. However, research from Tanzania shows that many students enter teacher education with a strong extrinsic motivation: their reasons for entering teacher education programmes seem not to be connected with a passion for teaching or a real desire to teach; rather they plan to leave teaching as soon as they find another job (Towse et al. 2002; Tungaraza 2012). Studies of in-service teachers in Tanzania reveal that low levels of commitment are a serious problem for the profession (Mkumbo 2012; Sumra 2005; Sumra and Katabaro 2014). Teacher educators could do something about this problem if student-teachers' levels of commitment to teaching could be made clear. Therefore, the current study aimed at classifying student-teachers based on their levels of commitment to teaching. It is hoped that the findings of this study will help policy-makers to improve student-teacher selection processes and inform teacher educators about appropriate procedures to enhance commitment to teaching.

Theoretical background

Commitment to teaching

'Commitment' refers to a high level of attachment to something in a social endeavour (Tyree 1996). Commitment entails a referent, that is, commitment to something outside the individual, for example, an organisation, a person or a particular activity. Commitment to teaching is commonly associated with commitment objects such as the teaching profession, the school organisation, students and teaching subjects (Dannetta 2002; Tyree 1996). Commitment to teaching is an important factor influencing teachers' job satisfaction and retention (Billingsley 2004; Klassen and Chiu 2011; Tait 2008) and student-teachers' intentions to enter the teaching profession (Rots et al. 2010).

The current study focuses on student-teachers and conceptualises commitment to teaching as student-teachers' psychological attachment to the teaching profession (cf. Dannetta 2002; Tyree 1996). This entails student-teachers' positive emotions towards the teaching profession and their willingness to enter the profession and to give their time and energy to the teaching and learning processes.

Student-teachers' motives for teaching

Researchers recognise a strong positive relationship of initial motivation for teaching with commitment to teaching (Bruinsma and Jansen 2010; Day, Sammons, and Stobart 2007; Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus 2012), and with graduates entrance into the teaching profession (Rots, Aelterman, and Devos 2014; Rots et al. 2010). Student-teachers have different motives for enrolling in teacher education (Bruinsma and Jansen 2010; Fokkens-Bruinsma and Canrinus 2012; Richardson and Watt 2006; Watt and Richardson 2007) and different motives for choosing teaching as a career (Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000; Pop and Turner 2009; Watt and Richardson 2008). According to these researchers, motives for choosing the teaching profession fall into three broad categories: (1) intrinsic motives which concern a person's liking of teaching as an activity and the profession in general, (2) altruistic motives,

which concern the person seeing teaching as a socially worthwhile and important job, such as a desire to help learners and a desire to contribute to society and (3) extrinsic motives, which concern aspects of the job which are not inherent in the work itself, such as level of salary and employment opportunities. Bruinsma and Jansen (2010) considering whether the motives contribute to the quality of teaching and to staying in the profession categorise motives for choosing the teaching profession into: (1) intrinsic adaptive motives, which concern the desire to feel competent and to gain mastery or satisfy curiosity. These motives promote lasting and effective engagement in a task; for example the desire to work with children or adolescents; (2) extrinsic adaptive motives, which concern motives based on external praise or rewards, or a situation where one acts at the behest of others (e.g. parents and close relatives). These motives promote lasting engagement in a task; for example choosing teaching because it has good career opportunities; and (3) extrinsic maladaptive motives, which concern the desire to receive praise or rewards. These motives do not promote engagement in the profession; for example choosing teaching as a 'fall-back' career.

However, research also provide insights into contextual differences in student-teachers' motives for becoming teachers. Klassen et al. (2011) found that student-teachers from Oman expressed greater endorsement of teaching as a 'fall-back' career and higher levels of socio-cultural influence in their choice of teaching than Canadian participants. In addition, Su et al. (2001) found that most student-teachers in the USA enter teaching of their own free will and choice while many Chinese student-teachers enter teacher education programmes reluctantly. In Hong Kong, (Wong, Tang, and Cheng 2014) and Australia, (Watt and Richardson 2007) found that student-teachers were motivated by intrinsic and altruistic factors to choose teaching as a career. Understanding student-teachers' motives stirred other researchers to classify student-teachers based on their motivation and level of commitment.

Student-teachers typology

Researchers classify student-teacher motives according to the main focus of the study. For example, Thomson, Turner, and Nietfeld (2012) classified student-teachers based on their motivation to choose teaching in relation to their perceptions of the teaching profession. They identified three types: (1) enthusiastic, comprising student-teachers with intrinsic and altruistic motives for teaching; (2) conventional, comprising those who also had altruistic and intrinsic motives, but rated professional opportunities (i.e. advancing in their teaching career, developing professionally) the lowest among the three types; and (3) pragmatic, comprising student-teachers who were least influenced by intrinsic and altruistic motives in their choice to become teachers.

Watt and Richardson (2008) and Watt, Richardson, and Wilkins (2014) focused on motivation for choosing teaching as a career in relation to professional engagement and career development aspirations. Watt, Richardson, and Wilkins (2014) identified three types: (1) the classroom-engaged careerist (enthusiastic about teaching and wished to spend their future careers in teaching); (2) the highly engaged persisters (enthusiastic about teaching but had thoughts of leaving classroom teaching after some time and pursuing other roles mostly associated with education); and (3) the lower engaged desisters (who saw teaching as a worthwhile career but indicated future plans to move into other jobs).

Using a different focus, Pop and Turner (2009) classified student-teachers based on their commitment-to-teaching levels. In a survey, student-teachers were asked to indicate the

extent to which they currently felt committed to a teaching career. Three types were developed from their results: (1) fully committed to teaching, (2) undecided and (3) not currently interested in teaching. In the second phase of the study, student-teachers identified as representative of each type were interviewed. The interviews explored these student-teachers' beliefs, perceptions and goals for becoming teachers, and their motivation for teaching.

As indicated above, research to date has laid a good foundation for understanding student-teachers' types based on their motivation for teaching, career development plans and levels of commitment to teaching. However, all of these studies are Western based. These types might be quite different for non-western developing countries, such as Tanzania, which is the context of the current study. Research shows that sociocultural context is an important factor for shaping people's motivation, perceptions and commitment to work. For example, Klassen et al. (2011) investigating pre-service teacher motivation across cultures, found differences in sociocultural influence on motivation for teaching between Canadian and Omani participants. Most Canadian participants referenced their motivation to 'I' and 'me', an individually oriented motivation, while Omani participants referenced their motivation to 'others', a socially oriented motivation. In a study comparing Chinese and USA student-teachers' types and perspectives, Su et al. (2001) found that Chinese student-teachers tend to come from less privileged socio-economic backgrounds than their American counterparts, and entered teacher education programmes reluctantly often as a result of lower test scores on the college entrance examination or because of support from scholarships or other financial aids. Also, these authors found that more Chinese student-teachers perceived teaching as a job of low status offering poor compensation and had no intention to commit to teaching as a lifelong career, compared with the USA's student-teachers.

In addition, the literature reveals strong evidence regarding the importance of personal characteristics such as personality traits for shaping motivations, perceptions and commitment to work (cf. Judge and Ilies 2002; Lindley and Borgen 2000). However, in the current study personal characteristics were not included because the aim was to develop types based on information that can be influenced in a teacher education programme.

Until now no studies have been carried out classifying student-teachers based on their levels of commitment to teaching in Tanzanian context, within a broader East African context. Therefore, this study used a qualitative and explorative approach, explored Tanzanian student-teachers' levels of commitment to teaching. It also explored student-teachers' motives for becoming a teacher and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. Pop and Turner's (2009) model was used as a guiding framework for the development of the study, chosen because they, as with the authors of the current study, explored student-teachers' levels of commitment based on their beliefs and perceptions about the teaching profession. The current study was aimed at identifying student-teachers' types based on their levels of commitment and describing the types based on student-teachers' motivation to enter the teaching profession, and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. The study was guided by the following questions:

- (1) How can student-teachers be classified on the basis of their levels of commitment to teaching?
- (2) How can these types from RQ1 be elaborated with information on student-teachers' motivation for teaching and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects?

Methodology

Research context and participants

The study was conducted in Tanzania, in the Dar es Salaam University College of Education (DUCE), a highly renowned teacher education universities located in Dar es Salaam city. This site was purposively selected as one of the two university colleges in Tanzania exclusively offering a teacher education degree. Undergraduate teacher education in Tanzania is conducted as a three-year bachelor programme in which student-teachers undertake course work followed by teaching practice in schools for two months at the end of the first and second years. Undergraduate teacher education has two main pathways: (1) an education major, including Bachelor of Education (B.Ed. Science or Arts); and (2) non-education major, including Bachelor of Arts with Education (BAEd) and Bachelor of Science with Education (B.Sc.Ed). Both education majors and non-education majors are secondary teaching pathways. Education majors (usually the minority of students) also qualify for teaching in teacher education colleges at certificate and diploma level. Secondary education in Tanzania is not compulsory and the qualification to teach in secondary schools is either a degree (3 years) or a diploma (2 years) programme. Qualification to teach in primary schools is a two-year diploma programme. The starting salary is higher for degree holders than for diploma holders.

The study included a total of 40 student-teachers: 10 from each year level (beginning of years 1, 2 and 3, and end of year 3). Participants were randomly selected from all registered students in the identified strata, such as gender and teacher education degree pathways, and invited to participate in the study. Participant information is shown in Table 1.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Dar es Salaam and the Dar es Salaam University College of Education. The main researcher (first author) telephoned potential participants, explained the study objectives and invited them to participate in the study. Upon agreement, arrangements were made to meet for the interview. Before the interview, participants gave their written consent to participate in the interview.

Table 1. Background information of the participants ($n = 37$)*.

	Number of participants	Total
Gender		37
Male	22	
Female	15	
Year of study		37
Year 1	8	
Year 2	9	
Beginning of year 3	10	
End of year 3	10	
Teacher education programme		37
BEd	12	
BAEd	15	
BScEd	10	
Age		37
20–24	22	
25–29	10	
30–34	4	
35+	1	

*Three out of 40 intended interviews excluded because they were incomplete.

Data collection

An interview guide approach (Patton 1990) was used in order to keep the interviews fairly conversational and situational. This was considered important because five interviewers (four research assistants and the main researcher who was the first author) conducted the interviews. Forty student-teachers were interviewed individually. Research assistants were recruited based on their experience in teacher education and qualitative research. All research assistants received one-day training to gain an understanding of the kind of information that the study required. All interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 30 and 50 min. Interviews were conducted in Kiswahili, the first language of both the interviewees and interviewers. The interview focused on three main topics: (1) commitment to teaching, (2) motivation to enter the teaching profession and (3) perceptions of environmental aspects (further elaborated below). Based on Pop and Turner's (2009) commitment-to-teaching levels framework, the Kiswahili speaker (first author) wrote interpretive summaries of all of the interviews, in English, in order to make a meaningful story from them. An English–Kiswahili translator independently verified the meanings in the interview quotations used, by translating back into the Kiswahili language. Three interview protocols were incomplete and were deleted from further analyses.

Commitment to teaching

The first main topic of the interview focused on student-teachers' psychological attachment to, and identification with, the teaching profession, emotions towards the teaching profession, and willingness to enter the profession. Student-teachers were asked whether they liked teaching, were happy with their decision to become teachers, if teaching was their first choice and if they intended to enter the profession after graduation and stay in the profession for a reasonable period of time.

Motivation to enter the teaching profession

The second main topic of the interview investigated student-teachers' motivation to enter the teaching profession. Student-teachers were asked to explain their reasons for choosing teaching, highlighting factors that influenced them to enter teacher education and that motivated them to enter the teaching profession after graduation.

Perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects

The third main interview topic was student-teachers' perceptions of teaching as a career and environmental aspects. Perceptions seem to be important factors for student-teachers' passion and commitment to the profession (Su et al. 2001). Moreover, perceptions of work environment and conditions shape attitudinal assumptions, which in turn affect workers' performance and commitment (Chesnut and Cullen 2014; Parves and Shakir 2013). Interview questions focused on the status of the teaching profession and perceptions of salary, working conditions and support from family and close relatives regarding their decisions to become teachers.

Data analysis

The first and second authors independently read through the summarised interviews, then carried out initial sorting and classification of the student-teachers based on their levels of

commitment to teaching using Pop and Turner's (2009) commitment levels framework. The classification of the student teachers was based on their levels of commitment, and then the types were described more fully based on the other characteristics i.e. student-teachers' motives for teaching and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. The main classification criterion was to place individuals within the types by connecting to the three labels identified by Pop and Turner (2009). The first and second authors shared results to check agreement about the placement of the participants within the types and to resolve differences in understanding specific characteristics for each type. Based on the commitment characteristics of the sample identified after detailed scrutiny of the interview data this was further elaborated, based on Pop and Turner's model, by creating two types within the committed type, with slight modifications to the type names based on characteristics of the student-teachers in the analysis.

Results

From the analysis of the interview data, the following four types were developed:

- (1) Committed passionate: student-teachers who are happy with their decision to become teachers.
- (2) Committed compromisers: student-teachers for whom teaching was not their first choice but who have decided to enter the teaching profession.
- (3) Undecided: student-teachers who express uncertainty about having chosen teaching as their career.
- (4) Uncommitted: student-teachers who are not interested in teaching. Their goal is to find another job.

Figure 1 shows the descriptions of the types. Below, each commitment type is described based on student-teachers' motivation to enter the teaching profession and perceptions about the teaching profession.

Committed passionate

Fifteen (7 males and 8 females) of the 37 student-teachers interviewed belonged to this type. Student-teachers in this type are characterised by their high levels of commitment to teaching. They chose teaching because they want to be teachers. They show a high level of enthusiasm and strong intentions to enter teaching and stay in the profession. Most expressed the belief that teaching is a lifelong career, and are committed to the learning and development of students.

Motivation to enter the profession

Student-teachers in this type gave intrinsic and altruistic reasons for becoming teachers. Statements such as, 'I like teaching', 'It is my calling', 'It is my dream job', 'I like students', 'I want to help learners achieve their goals' and 'I want to make a social contribution to society' were prominent in their responses. Extrinsic rewards like salary and employment opportunities were not important factors influencing their choice of teaching.

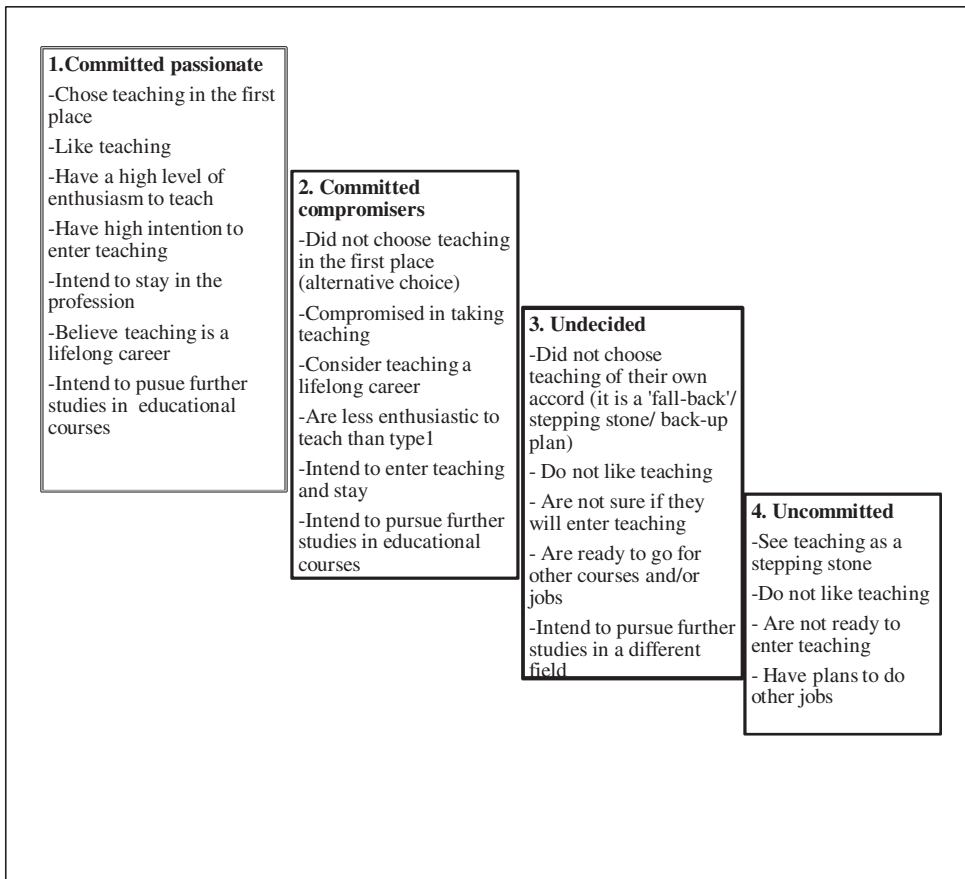


Figure 1. Identified commitment-to-teaching types by level (1 = high, 4 = no commitment).

Perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects

These student-teachers also have positive perceptions of the teaching profession. They view teaching as a high-status occupation although they seem aware that some people perceive teaching as a profession with low salary and low status. Most of these participants were able to give counterarguments to prejudices against teaching. One participant argued against the prejudice that students who choose teaching are 'failures' (meaning that they are students who performed poorly in the final national examinations), saying, 'People think that those who enter the teaching profession are failures, students who performed poorly in the final national examination ... it is not true, I passed with a second class, but I am here, a teacher to be!' [Interviewee 6].

The 'committed passionate' student-teachers expressed some concerns about aspects of teaching such as poor working conditions, student misbehaviour, ineffective school leadership and poor government policies, describing these as challenges; however, this did not seem to limit their commitment to teaching. Rather, they expressed a readiness to teach anywhere in the country, and with any kind of students. Finally, the 'committed passionate' student-teachers had positive perceptions of support from their significant others. They indicated that their choice for teaching was supported and even influenced by parents and

close relatives. Additionally, some student-teachers in this type stated that they had role model teachers who encouraged them to become teachers.

Committed compromisers

This was the second largest type, comprising 12 (8 males and 4 females) of the 37 participant student-teachers. Those belonging to the 'committed compromisers' type are mainly characterised by their decision to accept teaching as their future profession although they wished to be something else. These individuals explained that they chose teaching as a result of particular external circumstances such as financial difficulties or not being selected for their first preference courses. Student-teachers in this type did not express a dislike of the teaching profession; it was simply not their first choice. Because they did not get into their preferred course, they compromised; yet they seemed satisfied with teaching and generally expressed their readiness to enter the teaching profession after graduation. Additionally, it seemed that most 'committed compromisers' were aware that the time investment in the teacher education programme would make it difficult to change to other courses if they wished to change in the future.

Motivation to enter the profession

The 'committed compromisers' showed less intrinsic motivation than student-teachers in the 'committed passionate' type; rather, they aspired to extrinsic rewards. For example, most expected that it would be easy to find a job and that they would have flexible working hours, job security and a steady career path. However, they also expressed some altruistic motives for their decisions to become teachers: such as helping students and making a contribution to society.

Perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects

The 'committed compromisers' also showed some negative perceptions of the teaching profession, which at some point led them not to consider teaching as their first choice. When giving reasons why teaching was not their first choice, most mentioned low salary, poor working conditions and low social status. To some extent, it seems the poor school conditions caused some individuals in this type to be quite worried and unsure about whether they could manage as teachers. The 'committed compromisers' reported strong support and influence from their significant others. For example, they reported that their decision to choose teaching was significantly influenced by family members.

Undecided

The 'undecided' group was relatively small, comprising 9 (7 males and 2 females) of the 37 participants. Student-teachers in this group seemed not to be motivated to enter the teaching profession after graduation. They expressed a dislike for teaching, calling it a 'fall-back' career. The 'undecided' are characterised by a dilemma about their decision to become teachers. It seems that they face big internal conflicts because they are not sure about becoming teachers. They indicated that they wanted to do something other than teaching. However, they seemed aware that it would be difficult for them to get other jobs, which resulted in them considering teaching as a choice for the future or as temporary 'stop-gap'. Most

individuals belonging to the 'undecided' type expressed future plans to pursue further studies in fields other than teaching, after earning enough money to finance their studies. If they were to remain in teaching they expressed plans to do further training in order to qualify to teach at university level. The 'undecided' expressed their readiness to leave teaching at any time should other opportunities arise. Like the compromisers, student-teachers in this type disclosed that they entered teacher education reluctantly. They were forced by the availability of a study loan and/or lack of admission into their desired courses. For most, choosing to enter teacher education was a painful decision.

Motivation to enter the profession

The 'undecided' enrolled in teacher education for reasons other than passion to teach. Common reasons included, 'I was not admitted to my desired field', 'I just want a degree', 'It is easy to secure a study loan', 'I wanted to have something to do while deciding what to do next' and, 'It is easy to secure employment after graduation'. Although they did not seem committed to teaching, the undecided showed an understanding of what a teacher means to students and indicated that if they decided to enter the teaching profession, they would feel obliged to help students get the best out of their learning.

Perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects

Student-teachers in the 'undecided' type expressed openly negative perceptions of teachers and the teaching profession. They perceived teaching as a low-status and poorly paid occupation. They commented that teachers have a poor image in society because they do not earn enough to have a good life when compared with other professionals with a similar level of education.

Because of the perceived poor salary, the majority of the 'undecided' expressed plans to turn their full-time teaching job into a part-time job by doing private activities that would earn extra income. Working conditions such as poor infrastructures, particularly in rural areas, were mentioned as one of the factors discouraging them from entering the teaching profession. However, the 'undecided' also identified some positive aspects of teaching: they considered it a noble profession and said that teachers have the chance to work with the community.

Most student-teachers belonging to this type revealed that their decision to enrol in teacher education was disappointing. It was not supported by their families or close friends. Some of the 'undecided' student-teachers even declared that they would not tell others that they had enrolled in a teacher education programme.

Uncommitted

One (female) of the 37 student-teachers belonged to the 'uncommitted' type. This type consisted of student-teachers who never wished to become teachers and who never intend to enter the teaching profession. Unlike the undecided grouping, the student-teacher belonging to the 'uncommitted' type was explicit about her decision not to enter the teaching profession after graduation. It seems she viewed teaching as a stepping-stone towards her goals to engage in private activities and/or to seek employment in a field other than teaching for which she needs a degree qualification. This student-teacher enrolled in teacher education only to obtain a degree and keep herself busy while waiting for other options to emerge.

The availability of the student loan was the main motivating factor for her to enrol in teacher education.

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to describe student-teachers' types based on their levels of commitment to teaching. It has described student-teachers' commitment types based on their motivation to enter the teaching profession and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. Four distinct types were identified. Compared to Pop and Turner's (2009) findings, that identified three types, these findings include an additional unique type within the committed type, namely 'committed compromiser'. Because the 'committed compromisers' expressed a liking of, and readiness to, teach they could be labelled as 'fully committed' (cf. Pop and Turner 2009), thus concealing the unique characteristics regarding their compromising commitment. The identification of 'committed compromiser' in this study may be a context-based that can be explained by socio-cultural and economic factors that influence education and the job market in Tanzania. In contexts of low economic development, people may be forced to accept a trade-off between their interests and the job market.

Similar to previous studies (Pop and Turner 2009; Watt and Richardson 2008; Watt, Richardson, and Wilkins 2014), this study found that student-teachers in different types vary in their motivations and perceptions of the teaching profession. However, unlike the findings in those studies in which the choice for teaching was mostly related to intrinsic and altruistic motives, the current study, similar to other studies in Tanzania (cf. Mkumbo 2012; Towse et al. 2002; Tungaraza 2012), found that most student-teachers choose teaching based on extrinsic motives. This can probably be explained by the differing study context in terms of culture and level of socio-economic development. In developed countries, teaching is chosen from among the many other employment options available. In contrast, in Tanzania, a developing country, teaching is chosen from among few available options (Sumra and Katabaro 2014).

Limitations

Findings from this study are intended as exploratory rather than generalisable. Interviews with a relatively a small number of participants were used to explore a typology in Tanzanian context of teacher education, but this limits its generalisability. Findings may also be limited in the sense that it involved undergraduate student-teachers educated for teaching in secondary schools. The results could be different for non-graduate students and those educated for teaching in primary schools. Also, the findings reveal contextual based perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. The perceptions could be different in different context.

Implications for teacher education

The findings provide valuable insights for teacher educators and policy-makers as far as teacher training, recruitment, and retention is concerned. Both developed and developing countries need to attract, recruit and retain qualified teachers. Although the types may be

contextual, motives and characteristics of student-teachers cut across contexts even though some characteristics may have different weightings depending on the context. For example, the 'committed compromisers' were more noticeable in the Tanzanian sample of this study, which might be connected to the local economic situation. Different types were more noticeable in other studies (cf. Pop and Turner 2009; Thomson, Turner, and Nietfeld 2012; Watt and Richardson 2008; Watt, Richardson, and Wilkins 2014). However, countries that are more or less similar to the Tanzanian context in terms of sociocultural system and economic situation (in East and Central Africa) may find these findings more applicable. Additionally, countries in which studies show that motivation for teaching is highly inclined to extrinsic reasons like China (see Su et al. 2001) may also find these findings applicable. An understanding of student-teachers' types based on their levels of commitment to teaching could help in predicting which student-teachers are more likely to remain and those who are 'at risk' to leave teaching. Thus, the study might provide a better understanding of what kind of intervention might be needed to better support each type of student-teachers.

For example, for the 'committed passionate', teacher education programmes could be made more compelling through providing guidance, counselling and opportunity for discussion to find solutions to possible conflicting thoughts arising from experiences during teacher education. For the 'committed compromisers', who have the potential to become committed and passionate: teacher educators could nurture their interest and positive attitude towards teaching by helping them to imagine themselves staying satisfied in the profession and relieving them from the stress caused by conflicting thoughts over their choice. Teacher educators could help these student-teachers work through their decision by presenting positive role models, so they can see and think about the teaching profession positively. Similar to the 'committed compromisers', the 'undecided' may also experience some internal conflicts that need to be resolved if they are to consider the possibility of continuing in teaching. 'Undecided' student-teachers may find value and interest in teaching and possibly become committed if helped to resolve their dilemmas. Teacher educators could present teaching as a positive choice along with counselling to help the undecided make proper choices about whether teaching is a suitable choice for them.

Concluding remarks

This study has identified four student-teachers types based on their commitment-to-teaching levels and described the types based on student teachers' motivation to enter the teaching profession and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. The identification of these different types has important implications for the selection of future teachers and for shaping teacher education programmes, particularly in countries with a more or less similar context to Tanzania. Although student-teachers may have their ups and downs, helping them to become aware of their views and how these influence their teaching, making teacher education programmes responsive to different kinds of student needs and presenting teaching as a positive choice will go a long way towards strengthening the profession and student-teachers' commitment to it.

Disclosure statement

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