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## Student-teachers' commitment to teaching

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## **CHAPTER 6**

### **Summary, Discussion and Conclusion**

## 6.1 Introduction

Many studies indicate that low commitment to teaching is a problem facing many countries, which results in high teacher attrition rates and many teacher graduates who do not want to enter the profession after graduation. The studies in this dissertation aimed to contribute to understanding student-teachers' commitment to teaching in the Tanzanian context. Towards this goal, we set four specific research questions: 1) What factors explain differences in student-teachers' commitment to teaching and their intention to enter the teaching profession?, 2) How are student-teachers' gender and gender roles related to their commitment to teaching?, 3) How can student-teachers be classified on the basis of their levels of commitment to teaching?, and 4) What underlying themes within teacher education are related to student teachers' commitment to teaching?

The research project involved Tanzanian undergraduate student-teachers from one large teacher education based university. 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 year. Undergraduate teacher education in Tanzania has two main pathways: 1) an education major, including Bachelor of Education (B.Ed. - Science or Arts); 2) a non-education major, including Bachelor of Arts with Education (B.A.Ed.) and a Bachelor of Science with Education (B.Sc. Ed.). Both education majors and non-education majors are pathways into secondary teaching. The majority of students usually follow a non-education major pathway. Education majors also qualify for teaching in teacher education colleges at certificate and diploma level. The project study was conducted in the academic years of 2013/2014 and 2014/2015. Participants included student-teachers in the beginning of their first, second, and third year of study (September 2015), as well as at the end of their third year (May 2014, two months before graduation). Next is a summary of the four studies that comprise this dissertation.

## 6.2 Summary of the Studies

### ***6.2.1 Study 1: Factors of Student-teachers' Commitment to Teaching and Intention to enter the Teaching Profession.***

This study is based on research question 1: What factors explain differences in student-teachers' commitment to teaching and intention to enter the teaching profession? We investigated factors explaining differences in student-teachers' commitment to the teaching profession and student learning, and their intentions to enter the teaching profession. Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) was used as a framework for the factors that are identified in literature on teachers' commitment. This theory posits that an individual's psychological functioning is a result of a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, learning experiences, and environment. Thus, we examined student-teachers' commitment to teaching in relation to their personal characteristics, learning experiences and environmental determinants that affect the teaching profession.

Data were collected using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire. The scales that formed this questionnaire were constructed by the authors based on the literature, except for the Teacher Self-efficacy Scale. Participants included 3,246 student-teachers (33% females, 67% males) out of a total of 4,952 enrolled student-teachers from all years of study. Data was analysed using a forced entry multiple regression with personal characteristics, learning experiences and environmental determinants as independent variables and Commitment to the teaching profession, Commitment to student learning and Intention to enter the teaching profession as dependent variables.

Results indicate that differences in student-teachers' commitment were explained by personal characteristics (i.e., student-teachers' sense of teaching self-efficacy), environmental factors (i.e., perceived influence of significant others and school conditions), and learning experiences (i.e., student-teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession, their teaching subjects, and satisfaction with the teacher education programme). With regard to personal characteristics, we found a positive relationship between student-teachers' sense of teaching self-efficacy, on the one hand, and all three commitment dependent variables, on the other. Age and Gender showed weak or insignificant relationships with student-teachers' commitment to teaching. For environmental determinants, we found a strong positive relation of perceived support from Significant

others with the three dependent variables and a strong positive relationship between student-teachers' perceptions of school conditions with their Commitment to the teaching profession and student learning. Person environment determinants showed a weak or a non-significant relationship with the three dependent variables. Moreover, we found a strong relationship between all Learning experience variables and the three commitment dependent variables.

Conclusively, of all the variables, Learning experiences appeared to include the variables that were the strongest related to student-teachers' commitment. We found a strong relationship between all Learning experience variables and student-teachers' commitment to the teaching profession, their Commitment to students' learning, and their Intentions to enter the teaching profession. Given the importance of Learning experiences, it is crucial that teacher educators are aware of student-teachers' underlying perceptions and beliefs about subjects and the teaching profession. From this, teacher educators can design interventions that may change student-teachers' negative attitudes and/or enhance positive attitudes towards the profession and their teaching subjects. For example, teacher educators could address issues related to student-teachers' attitudes towards teachers and the teaching profession by presenting positive role models and counselling so that student-teachers can find value and interest in teaching and be prompted to think about the teaching profession more positively. To develop student-teachers' positive attitudes towards their subjects emphasis could be on developing student-teachers' subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) - as mastery in subject matter knowledge and PCK is important in enhancing student-teachers' attitude towards their subject (Johnston & Ahtee, 2005). Furthermore, to increase student-teachers' satisfaction with their teacher education programme teacher educators have to take in account both quality and quantity issues of the programme; feelings of satisfaction encompasses many aspects in teacher education including course content, quality of teaching at the campus, quality of the practicum and social and work interactions taking place during the programme.

The role of teaching self-efficacy in enhancing student-teachers' commitment to teaching and intention to enter the teaching profession is also emphasised in our findings, supporting findings of many other previous studies. Self-efficacy was the strongest and the only strong

personal factor for all three commitment variables. Thus, teacher educators must recognize the importance of, and do their best to foster teaching self-efficacy in student-teachers. For example, teacher educators and school mentors could help student-teachers in mastering their teaching through guidance and mentorship during teaching practicum - as mastery experiences appear to make the strongest contribution to self-efficacy judgments among teachers (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2007). Lastly, our findings indicate a strong relation of perceived support from Significant Others with commitment in all three models. The role of Significant others on individuals' attitudes and career choices can be well explained by cultural orientations of the Tanzanian society; culturally Tanzanians are collectivists, a culture in which aspect of relatedness and interdependence is highly emphasised, as such it is likely to have much influence in individuals' decision making including career choice decisions.

### ***6.2.2 Study 2: Gender and Gender Role Differences in Student-teachers' Commitment to Teaching.***

Study 2 was based on research question 2: How are student-teachers' gender and gender roles related to their commitment to teaching? Gender might be an important factor in explaining what kinds of prospective teachers are attracted to teaching, as internationally findings indicate that in many countries a female workforce dominates teaching, particularly at early childhood and primary levels. However, findings concerning the relationship between gender and commitment to teaching are inconclusive. In the second study, we included both gender and gender role as independent variables and examined the relationship between student-teachers' gender, gender roles and commitment to teaching. The study aimed to answer three specific research questions: 1) what are student teachers' gender role types? 2) How do female and male student-teachers and student-teachers with different gender role types vary in their commitment to teaching? And, 3) how do female and male student-teachers and student-teachers with different gender role types vary in their intentions to enter the teaching profession? To answer these questions, the same group of student-teachers from Study 1 (n = 3,246) completed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) questionnaire in addition to the Self-reported Commitment to Teaching questionnaire they completed in Study 1. Cluster analysis was used to establish student-teachers' gender

role clusters and multiple regression to establish the relationship between student-teachers' gender, gender roles and commitment to teaching.

Results from cluster analysis on the masculine and feminine scale of the BSRI indicated three clusters: (1) highly androgynous students with high scores on both masculine and feminine scales, (2) medium androgynous students with relatively high scores on both masculine and feminine scales, and (3) low androgynous students with low scores in relation to the other two groups on both masculine and feminine scales of the BSRI. Based on gender, we found that more female than male student-teachers reported to be highly androgynous. Furthermore, findings from covariance analysis showed that gender roles were significantly related to commitment to teaching and to intention to enter the teaching profession. Highly androgynous student-teachers reported significantly more commitment to teaching and higher intentions to enter the teaching profession compared to medium and low androgynous student-teachers. We did not find significant relationships between gender, on the one hand, and commitment to teaching and intention to enter the teaching profession, on the other hand.

We concluded that gender role appeared to be an important factor for student teachers' commitment to teaching although small effect sizes were observed. The reported small effect sizes indicate that there are other factors influencing student teachers' commitment and intention to join the profession that were beyond the scope of this research. However, gender as a variable, which has been used in many commitment studies, showed no effect on commitment to teaching in this study. Thus we recommend that in order to understand the relationship between gender and student teachers' commitment to teaching, gender role should be included in future studies.

### ***6.2.3 Study 3: Typology of Student-teachers.***

Study 3 is based on research question 3: How can student-teachers be classified on the basis of their levels of commitment to teaching? In the third study, we classified student-teachers based on their levels of commitment to teaching, motivation to enter the teaching profession and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. Through interviews with 37 student-teachers we answered two research questions: 1) how can student-teachers be classified on the basis of their levels of commitment to teaching? And, 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? To ensure representativeness, the interviews included a sample of student-teachers in the beginning of first, second and third year of academic year 2014/2015, and in the end of third year of academic year 2013/2014. Interviews focused on three topics:

- 1) Commitment to teaching: This topic 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.
- 2) Motivation to enter the teaching profession: Within this topic, interviewers asked student-teachers 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.
- 3) Perception of teaching and the teaching profession: 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.

Analysis of the interview data was based on Pop and Turner's (2009) framework for profiling student-teachers based on their levels of commitment. Results indicated four types of student-teachers. The first type include 'Committed passionate' - student-teachers who like teaching and chose teaching in the first place, who were intrinsically motivated and ready to take up teaching after graduation. They had positive perceptions of the teaching profession and support from their significant others. The second type include 'Committed compromisers' – these are student-teachers who were mainly characterized by their decision to accept teaching as their future profession although they wished to be something else, they showed less intrinsic motivation than student-teachers in the 'Committed passionate' type and they showed some negative perceptions of the teaching profession. They also reported

strong support and influence from their significant others. The third type includes 'Undecided' student-teachers – those who are characterized by a dilemma about their decision to become teachers. They seemed not to be motivated to enter the teaching profession after graduation, expressed a dislike for teaching, calling it a 'fall-back' career. They expressed their readiness to leave teaching at any time should other opportunities arise. They expressed openly negative perceptions of teachers and the teaching profession and lack of support from significant others. Lastly, we found a fourth type of student-teachers 'uncommitted', which included student teachers who generally were not committed to teaching right from the outset and who showed no intention to enter the profession at all.

From these findings it can be concluded that there are different types of student-teachers in teacher education, differing in their levels of commitment to teaching, motivations for teaching and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects. An understanding of these student-teachers' types could help in predicting which student-teachers are more likely to remain and those who are 'at risk' to leave teaching. Thus, we may have a better understanding of what kind of intervention might be needed to better support each type of student-teacher. With a well organised teacher education programme, all types of student-teachers could be helped to become committed to teaching. We assert that 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 similar context to Tanzania.

#### ***6.2.4 Study 4: Characteristics of Teacher Education and Student-teachers' Commitment to Teaching***

In the fourth study, we investigated underlying themes within teacher education that are related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching using a systematic review of the literature. Twenty-two peer reviewed articles were included in the review. They included studies on student-teachers preparing to teach at elementary, primary and secondary level of education through different teacher education pathways.

Analysis of articles in this review distinguished ten underlying themes of teacher education that are related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching. Six of these can be understood as main themes including 1) initial practicum experience, 2) social and work interactions,

3) perceived preparedness and satisfaction with teacher education programme, 4) teacher educators as ‘role models’, 5) teaching and learning methods, and 6) a link between theory and practice. These six main themes will be explained in further detail below.

It was found that student-teachers’ initial teaching experience (theme 1) is related to student-teachers’ commitment to teaching in both positive and negative ways depending on how successful it is. While the successful experience is accompanied by student-teachers’ feelings of satisfaction and increased commitment to teaching, due to having an impact on students’ learning and having a positive genuine relationship with students, the unsuccessful experience is accompanied by frustration and decreased commitment to teaching due to the experience of personal failure in executing different teacher roles.

Concerning student-teachers’ social and work interactions (theme 2), results showed that it is strongly related to their commitment to teaching. Interactions reported in the reviewed literature include support from faculty, school mentors and teacher educators, and a sense of belonging to colleagues in a school context/culture/climate. Of all interactions, the most frequently reported one is related to the interaction between student-teachers and their school mentors. Mentors’ pedagogical knowledge, that is the way they guide, give autonomy and provide feedback to student-teachers, matters in enhancing student-teachers’ commitment to teaching.

Furthermore, student-teachers’ perceived preparedness and satisfaction with the teacher education programme (theme 3), includes student-teachers’ feeling about whether the programme has prepared them to take on teachers’ roles. Perceived preparedness encompasses many aspects in teacher education including course content, connection between theory and practice, quality of teaching and quality of the practicum. Findings from the reviewed studies concerning the relationship between student-teachers’ perceived preparedness and their commitment to teaching are inconclusive. On the one hand, a positive association was found, while on the other hand, no significant association between the variables was found. We argued that one reason for the inconsistency may be rooted in the definition and consequently the measurement of student-teachers’ perceived preparedness and satisfaction.

The fourth identified theme related to the role of teacher educators as ‘role models’. Findings concerning this theme are also inconclusive – both significant positive and non-significant relationships are reported.

Similarly, we argued that the lack of a common understanding and measures of this aspect resulted in differences in the findings. Connected to the role of teacher educators, reviewed literature reports a positive influence of the teaching methods employed by teacher educators (theme 5). Interactive teaching methods positively influence student-teachers' commitment to teaching.

The final main theme is related to the link between theory and practice. Findings show that student-teachers' commitment to teaching is enhanced when they can connect theory that they learn on campus with their teaching experiences during school practicum.

Conclusively, analysis of the reviewed literature indicated a number of underlying themes within teacher education that are important for student-teachers' commitment to teaching; we assert that teacher education is an important factor that could be used to put a strong foundation of student-teachers' commitment to teaching. This foundation could serve as a shield against commitment problems in their teaching career path. Teacher educators could plan and execute activities in a way that purposely focus to enhance among other things, student-teachers' commitment to teaching. We found that teacher education course content, quality of both campus courses and practicum, and linking between the theoretical and practical components of the programme are important factors related to student-teachers' perceived preparedness for teaching and consequently, their commitment to teaching. As a suggestion for teacher education programme content that is important for student teachers' perceived preparedness, we identified Darling-Hammond and Bransford (2005) seminal work on the curriculum of teacher education. They suggest that teacher education should consider both the quality and quantity of education in subject matter (what to teach) and content-specific teaching methods (how to teach), and develop a curriculum that is organized as a coherent whole that helps student-teachers to see how ideas are connected and related across the curriculum, what dimensions of teaching are important and how they are supposed to fit together. Moreover, we suggest that teacher educators should be 'role models' in terms of the teaching methods they use in teaching, and in caring and commitment to teaching. We propose that practicum experiences could be made more compelling and successful when schools and teacher education institutes collaborate in for example in professional development and partnership schools and if school mentors are well prepared for their role.

## **6.3 Methodological Reflections**

In this section we provide some methodological reflections on the dissertation including limitations and possible avenues for future research. We reflect on three methodological issues: 1) the use of a questionnaire, 2) the way teacher education elements are measured, and 3) generalizability of findings.

### ***6.3.1 Use of Questionnaire***

In studies one and two, a questionnaire was used to collect the data. Questionnaires are a widely used self-report method with the possibility to reach many participants within a short time and produce a large amount of information. However, the use of questionnaires is subject to a number of limitations. One of these limitations relates to the depth and trustworthiness of information obtained. Questionnaire information mostly is superficial because the researcher decides what kind of information respondents should give (especially the closed questionnaire). Moreover, because the researcher has no room to probe or explore the responses, there is no way to know if respondents have really thought the question through before answering, if respondents would like to give additional information to explain their answers, or if respondents are honest about their answers, coupled with social desirability bias (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Another limitation of questionnaires is the possibility to have responses end up in a certain pattern, clustering for instance around the centre, or around one end or another of the scale in a scale type questionnaire. A third and related limitation is that responses to one item may affect responses to another item, the tendency described as respondents 'creating a single mind set' (Cohen et al, 2011) or 'assimilation effect' (Leeuw, Hox, & Dillman, 2008).

In studies one and two, we aimed at having a large data set by reaching about 4,950 student-teachers enrolled at the Dar es salaam University College of Education (DUCE). Our interest was in student-teachers' perceptions of commitment; hence, the use of questionnaire was considered the best option. We managed to reach many students with a participation rate of 66%, but as a limitation we couldn't control the questionnaire completion process through probing or exploring respondents' response behaviour. As a result, incidences of a tendency of some respondents to cluster their responses at one point of a scale

appeared to affect our data. In some cases, we could see that even the negatively framed items were rated the same as the positive items. However, taking into account the response style effect we identified and deleted from the dataset 32 extreme cases where respondents tended to give the same option on a scale throughout the questionnaire and cases where respondents formed certain patterns (e.g. a zig zag). Although almost all scales showed good reliability scores, most items that were negatively framed were deleted in the analysis. We conclude that these limitations did not influence our findings. However, in order to have more in-depth findings of questionnaire results, in future research it will be useful to combine interview and questionnaire data in such a way that individuals' responses in a questionnaire and interview could be connected. In addition, for more insights into the findings on student-teachers' commitment to teaching, future research could couple these student-teachers' perceptions with information on experienced teachers' commitment to teaching.

### ***6.3.2 The Way Teacher Education Program Elements are Measured***

A second methodological issue relates to the measurement of certain elements in the study. In Study 1, we included student-teachers' satisfaction with their teacher education programme variable in the model explaining factors related to their commitment to teaching. As one variable, in a questionnaire, 'satisfaction' included items focusing on aspects of teacher education such as satisfaction with course content, quantity and relevance, with teacher educators (lecturers) as role models; with lecturers' support to student-teachers, and with teaching practicum and teacher education as a programme in general. In Study 4, we gathered information through a systematic literature review. Consequently, we have a more detailed idea of the underlying themes and programme elements that could be interesting to study in the future. For example, a study about the relationship between teacher education and student-teachers' commitment to teaching, should include a more detailed look at student-teachers' evaluation of their teacher education programme, rather than just their level of satisfaction with the programme. In our Study 1, the aim was to have a general view of factors related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching. To be specific, a more in-depth study about the underlying themes within teacher education could give additional insights into understanding the relationship between the teacher education

programme and student-teachers' commitment to teaching.

### ***6.3.3 Issues of Generalizability***

A third methodological issue concerns the generalizability of the conclusions of the studies in this dissertation. In these studies, empirical data have been collected from student-teachers from one teacher education institution in Tanzania. Although we do not have any indications that this institution is not representative of teacher education in general, we should be careful about generalizing our conclusions to teacher education in Tanzania, generally, or outside Tanzania. The context of the institution might be important and influence our conclusions. First, the institution where we gathered data is teacher education dedicated institution, hence with a specialised profile compared with other institutions. This could imply that interactions amongst student-teachers who are in the same programme at this university may influence student-teachers' perceptions of teachers and the teaching profession and consequently influence their commitment. Secondly, the institution is located in the largest city and economical centre of Tanzania (Dar es Salaam) with a population that might not be similar to the population in other Tanzanian cities and regions. Thirdly, as we argued in the three empirical studies, the Tanzanian context might be so specific that it would be tricky to generalize to teacher education in Western countries, other developing countries or even other East-African countries. At the same time, some generalizations can be made, for example with other countries that have similar features as Tanzania regarding issues related to motivation for teaching and status of the teaching profession. In order to validate our conclusions from this dissertation, empirical studies would have to be set up in other countries with different educational systems, economical situations and cultural values. Even though the context is specific in a particular way, limiting findings of generalizability, in the systematic literature review (Study 4) we confirm factors that are similar in different contexts.

## **6.4 Practical Implications**

This dissertation has shown that student-teachers' levels of commitment to teaching differ, with the differences explained by personal characteristics (i.e., student-teachers' sense of self-efficacy), environmental factors (i.e., perceived influence of significant others and school conditions), and

learning experiences (i.e., student-teachers' attitudes towards the teaching profession, their teaching subjects, and satisfaction with the teacher education programme). In addition, through a review of the literature, a number of underlying themes within teacher education are identified that are related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching. These findings have implications for teacher education programmes and policy makers in order to enhance student-teachers' commitment to teaching. We will discuss two of these implications: 1) how to improve teacher education programmes in order to enhance students-teachers' commitment and, 2) how to select candidates for teacher education programmes and the teaching profession.

#### ***6.4.1 Implications for Teacher Education Programmes***

Student-teachers' learning experiences (i.e., attitudes towards the teaching profession, their teaching subjects, and satisfaction with the teacher education programme) appeared to be the most influential factor influencing their commitment to teaching. Student-teachers' level of commitment to teaching was well elaborated in relation to their motivation to enter the teaching profession and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental aspects in Study 3. Even though teacher education may have little influence on commitment in terms of personal, systemic and contextual factors, there are areas where teacher education can make a difference. As such, teacher educators need to be made aware of different types of student-teachers, and student-teachers' underlying perceptions and attitude towards teaching subjects and the teaching profession. From this, teacher educators could design interventions that may change student-teachers' negative attitudes and/or enhance positive attitudes towards the profession and their teaching subjects. For example, in Study 3 we identified that for some types of student-teachers, e.g. 'committed compromisers' and 'undecided', it is important to help them find value and interest in teaching and think positively about teaching, and in this way imagine themselves staying satisfied in the profession. Teacher educators could help these types of student-teachers work through their decision to become a teacher by presenting positive role models, so they can see and think about the teaching profession positively. Teacher educators could also represent teaching as a positive choice along with providing counselling to help student-teachers find value and interest in teaching. Although the 'undecided' type expressed a dislike for teaching,



calling it a ‘fall-back’ career, they may end up entering teaching due to economic and employment realities. Due to a high demand for teachers in Tanzania in particular, teaching has been the main reliable source of employment in the public sector for some years. People tend to choose teaching regardless of the claims about low remuneration, saying that having “something is better than nothing”. However, if newly graduated teachers enter the teaching profession with low levels of commitment, they will end up no doubt lamenting their decision, not performing well in the job and ultimately leaving the teaching profession altogether.

Connected to teacher educators’ understanding of student-teachers’ levels of commitment and designing appropriate interventions, in Study 4, we discussed findings showing underlying themes within teacher education that are related to student-teachers’ commitment to teaching. Understanding these themes may be useful for teacher educators to improve their knowledge about factors that influence student-teachers’ commitment to teaching, and where appropriate, teacher educators could reshape their programs to enhance commitment amongst student-teachers. For example, the teacher education programme courses should be more connected and coherent to help student-teachers see clear links between theory and practice. In institution-based courses, teacher educators could draw on student-teachers’ practicum experiences, and – the other way around- in mentoring student-teachers on school practicum, their experiences might be connected to learning theories that are covered in courses at the institution. In this way, transfer between theory and practice could be understood as a two-way process. In addition, teacher educators could serve as positive ‘role models’ to student-teachers in teaching, guidance, caring and support. Not only what teacher educators do with student-teachers but also the attitudes they show towards teachers and the teaching profession could have a great impact on student-teachers’ commitment to teaching.

In the case of the school practicum, quality issues should be taken into account. While it is true that carrying out actual teaching during practicum may result in a kind of ‘reality shock’ among student-teachers, practicum should be organised in such a way that helps student-teachers effectively deal with these realities. Student-teachers should be guided, encouraged and given opportunities to exercise their pedagogical knowledge and skills in a supportive learning and work environment. School mentors have an important role to mentor student-teachers during

the practicum. Although mentors may choose their own mentoring approach, findings from the systematic literature review (Study 4) that show difficult relationships between student-teachers and their mentors emerge from problems concerning the approaches used by mentors and the type of interactions mentors have with student-teachers. There seems to be a gap in understanding the mentor and student-teacher relationship that needs to be taken into account. This gap could arise from a lack of common understanding with regard to the goals of practicum amongst student-teachers, teacher educators and school mentors. Every participating individual in the learning to teach process should be made aware of what roles s/he is expected to carry out, what these roles entail, how the roles should be accomplished for a successful practicum experience and how different participants can effectively cooperate towards the goals of practicum. In this way, collaboration between teacher education institutes and schools is important to create a conducive teaching practicum environment and fruitful interactions between all participants in the learning to teach experience. Such collaboration can be achieved (for example) through professional development workshops for teachers or working closely with partnership schools. In collaboration, both teacher educators and school mentors could identify ways that student-teachers may be supported through their learning to teach that enhances their commitment to teaching.

In some contexts, school mentors are specially prepared teachers working in schools who guide and coach student-teachers in their particular subject areas during the practicum. In other contexts, any in-service teacher can mentor student-teachers by having them work in their (mentors') classes, which is the case with practicum in Tanzania. In any case, if student teachers are to have a successful practicum, mentors must be suitably prepared, not only in a 'one-off' manner, but also in an ongoing regular way to keep abreast of developments and innovations within teaching, and to learn about the effect of different mentoring approaches on student-teachers' attitudes towards teaching and the profession. In addition, school-based mentors and teacher educators need opportunities to work together to develop a common knowledge base and shared language for teaching which could be helpful in promoting a consistent experience for student-teachers and that enhances their capacity to link theory and practice.

#### ***6.4.2 Implication for the Selection of Student-teachers for the Programme / of Teachers for a Job***

In a situation where there is high demand for teachers, it is possible to assume that whoever enters a teacher education programme or the teaching profession is an appropriate candidate for teaching, and will become an effective teacher, thus fulfilling the requirement to recruit teachers. Findings in this dissertation indicate that various types of student-teachers enter the teacher education programme with different levels of commitment to teaching, motivation for teaching and perceptions of the teaching profession. Of these, some do not intend to enter teaching after graduation, some are still contemplating their decision to become a teacher and some have decided that they will only enter the profession temporarily, while waiting for a better job opportunity. While we recognise the significant contribution of teacher education programmes in developing and enhancing student-teachers' commitment to teaching, at the same time, it is important to attract and select appropriate individuals for the profession who can demonstrate their commitment to teaching. There is a need for policy makers to set selection criteria that will facilitate the selection of the most suitable individuals to enter teacher education programmes.

Barber and Mourshed (2007) suggest the use of rigorous screening and selection procedures of teacher education candidates before they begin training to become teachers. Selection criteria should be established that can maximise the likelihood that those entering the profession will become effective, committed teachers. These authors suggest the use of selection criteria that include the right mix of academic and personal qualities (including non-academic capabilities associated with successful teaching, e.g. motivation to teach and strong interpersonal and communication skills) that give student-teachers the best chance of becoming effective, committed teachers. They further assert that selecting for individuals entering teacher education may be self-reinforcing; low acceptance rates may increase competition, boost the prestige of the profession and therefore the desirability of the programme and the high status of the profession. They give an example of Singapore and Finland where teaching is a high-status and very competitive entry profession. Candidates for university teacher training programmes must

pass a rigorous application process, including a curriculum vitae screen, literacy and numeracy assessments, and interviews with experienced school principals.

Depending on the context, countries need to focus on attracting the most suitable candidates for teacher education. In Tanzania in particular, the criteria and policy for selecting individuals into teacher education programmes may need to be tightened since it appears that at least currently, teacher education in Tanzania mostly attracts unmotivated and academically weak candidates (Anangisye, 2010; Kitta & Fussy, 2013; Sumra, 2005), and where selection only takes into account academic qualifications. The minimum admission requirement for teacher education in Tanzania is at least two principal passes in teaching subjects - a maximum of Division III. However, because of the low status attached to the teaching profession in the country, mostly it is the academically weak students and those who could not secure admission into their preferred courses who enter into teacher education (Kitta & Fussy, 2013). Thus, additional criteria to include non-academic qualifications could help to select the most suited individuals for teaching in this context. Equally important, the recruitment of teachers should be made competitive whereby graduates apply for a job and must go through rigorous selection procedures that include assessment of applicants' levels of commitment to teaching.

## **6.5 Final Conclusion**

Based on the findings of this dissertation, we can conclude that student-teachers' learning experiences (i.e. their attitude towards the teaching profession, attitude towards their teaching subjects and satisfaction with their teacher education), perceived support of significant others and sense of self-efficacy are important variables related to their commitment to teaching. In addition, we found that student-teachers' levels of commitment to teaching are well explained by their motivation for teaching and their perceptions of the teaching profession and environmental determinants. Even though we understand that teacher education may have little or no influence on some attributes of a person, environmental determinants and attitudes resulting from systemic and socio-economic factors, we propose that teacher education has a very important role to play in enhancing student-teachers' commitment to teaching. At present, this function of teacher education is hardly recognised and hence, underutilised. In particular, teacher educators can play a very important role for example in developing interventions within their programmes that aim at enhancing student-teachers'

positive beliefs and attitudes towards teachers and the teaching profession. Our identification of underlying themes within teacher education that are related to student-teachers' commitment sheds light on what teacher educators and other practitioners in teacher education should consider in order to develop student-teachers' commitment.

Moreover, although we recognise contextual differences in the provision of teacher education and that there is no universal curriculum content of teacher education, it is important that in any context teacher education should at least develop student-teachers feelings of preparedness to take on the teaching role, and hence address their commitment to teaching. If teacher education is appropriately conducted, taking into account issues highlighted in this dissertation, it could lead to high positive impact on student-teachers' commitment to teaching.

With regard to issues related to the status of the teaching profession, the power for change rests with both teachers themselves and governments. While the government needs to set training and recruitment policies, including other factors such as work environment and conditions and reasonable remunerations (not included in the focus of this dissertation) that can boost the status of the teaching profession, teachers should model the high status of the teaching profession in their work by showing high levels of professionalism and commitment to teaching that leads to an appreciation of the job as one of high quality. At the same time, it is not only teachers and governments who can improve the professional status of teaching, but also student-teachers themselves, who can be stimulated to understand the powerful potential they hold in shaping attitudes towards the profession which can result in a higher professional status of teaching.