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Summary

Research indicates that commitment to teaching is an important predictor of student-teachers' intention to enter the teaching profession and their actual entrance into the teaching profession. Commitment to teaching also influences teachers' job satisfaction and retention in the teaching profession. However, internationally, low levels of commitment to teaching amongst teachers have been reported which is a significant problem facing the profession. As a result of low commitment, high rates of teacher attrition, are reported in many countries, mostly occurring within the first five years of employment, along with high levels of teacher absenteeism, and teachers being dissatisfied and unmotivated to teach. In addition, it has been found that many teacher graduates do not want to enter the profession after graduation. The consequence of this situation is that there are high levels of teacher shortage reported worldwide. In order to change this situation, a sufficient number of committed teachers must be both recruited and retained within the profession. The studies that comprise this dissertation sought to contribute knowledge to understanding factors related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching. In this dissertation, commitment to teaching refers to student-teachers' positive emotions towards the teaching profession, their willingness to enter the profession and to give their time and energy to the processes of teaching and learning. In our measure of commitment, we included items capturing commitment to the profession, school teaching subject and student learning.

This dissertation is set in the context of Tanzania mainland. Demand for teachers in Tanzania mainland is very high as the number of school-aged children has rapidly increased in response to a high population growth rate. Moreover, the demand for teachers in Tanzania has also increased following the governments' implementation of Primary and Secondary Education Development Programs (PEDP I, II and SEDP I, II) from 2004 to 2014. PEDP and SEDP are among the Educational Sector Development Programmes put forward by the Tanzanian government as a commitment to achieving Universal Primary Education. In response to the teacher shortage, a focus on attracting, training, and retaining adequate numbers of high-quality teachers was one among many objectives of the SEDP II. For the past ten years, the government practice has been to give study-loan priority to students enrolling in teacher education together with offers of direct employment upon graduation. A Higher Education Loan is a loan given to Tanzanian students pursuing studies in

higher education to cover their tuition fees, meals, accommodation, field training and other special faculty requirements. These teacher training and recruitment practices in Tanzania have motivated students to enter teacher education programs. However, research in Tanzania shows that many student teachers enter teacher education as a last resort connected to a strong extrinsic motivation: their reasons to enter the program seem to be disconnected from a passion or commitment to teaching, rather they just want to have a job, with many planning to leave teaching as soon as they find another job. This situation leads to an overall picture of non-committed teachers in Tanzanian primary and secondary education. For teacher education, student-teachers who are not committed to the profession may not make an effort to make a career of the teaching profession.

As research indicates a strong connection between student-teachers' initial commitment and intention to enter the teaching profession, this dissertation aimed to contribute to understanding student-teachers' commitment to teaching in the Tanzanian context. Specifically, this dissertation investigated the relationship between student-teachers' commitment to teaching, on the one hand, and their personal characteristics, learning experiences and environmental determinants impacting the teaching career, on the other hand. 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? These research questions formed four independent studies reported in Chapters 2 – 5 of this dissertation.

The research reported in this dissertation mainly involved undergraduate student-teachers in Tanzania mainland who are preparing to teach in secondary schools and teacher training colleges (at certificate and diploma level) in Tanzania, as commitment problems in Tanzania are more pronounced in teachers at secondary levels compared with primary levels. The research project involved student-teachers from one large teacher education based university in Tanzania. Undergraduate teacher education in Tanzania is conducted as a three-year bachelor programme

in which student-teachers undertake coursework 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 studies that comprise this dissertation are reported in chapters 2-5. An outline of each study is described below.

Chapter 2 reports the first study that was based on research question 1: What factors explain differences in student-teachers' commitment to teaching and intention to enter the teaching profession? Based on Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) which posits that an individual's psychological functioning is a result of a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, learning experiences, and environment, 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. 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 in an undergraduate teacher education program at Dare es salaam University College of Education (DUCE) in Tanzania. 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).

Of all the variables, Learning experiences appeared to be related to 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, we propose that it is crucial that teacher educators are aware of student-teachers' underlying perceptions and attitude towards their teaching subjects and the teaching profession. With this knowledge, teacher educators can design interventions that may change student-teachers' negative attitudes and/or enhance positive attitudes towards the profession and their teaching subjects. Moreover, our findings emphasise the important relationship between student-teachers' self-efficacy and their commitment to teaching and intention to enter the teaching profession, as shown in many other previous studies. Thus, it implies that teacher educators must recognize the importance of, and do their best to foster teaching self-efficacy in student-teachers. 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.

Chapter 3 reports the second study that 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. Research findings concerning the relationship between gender and commitment to teaching are inconclusive. In this study, we 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?
- 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?

A total of (n = 3,246) student-teachers responded to a self-reported

questionnaire comprising commitment to teaching items, gender as a demographic variable and items from Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Cluster analysis was used to establish student-teachers' gender role clusters and multivariate analyses of covariance to establish the relationship between student-teachers' gender, gender roles and commitment to teaching.

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. Concerning gender, we found that more female than male student-teachers reported to be highly androgynous. Covariance analysis showed that findings 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 in relation to 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.

Chapter 4 reports the third study that was based on research question 3: How can student-teachers be classified on the basis of their levels of commitment to teaching? In this 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?
- 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.

Results indicated four types of student-teachers: 1) 'Committed passionate' - those who were intrinsically motivated for teaching and chose teaching in the first place, 2) 'Committed compromisers' - these are mainly characterized by their decision to accept teaching as their future profession although they wished to be something else, 3) 'Undecided' - those who are characterized by a dilemma about their decision to become teachers, and 4) 'Uncommitted', - those who generally were not committed to teaching from the outset and showed no intention enter the profession at all.

From these findings we 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. As such, an understanding of these student-teachers' types could help in predicting which student-teachers are more likely to remain in teaching and those who are 'at risk' to leave teaching, thus important implications for the selection of future teachers and for shaping teacher education programmes, particularly in countries with similar features as Tanzania regarding issues related to motivation for teaching and status of the teaching profession.

Chapter 5 reports the fourth study that was based on research question 4: What underlying themes within teacher education are related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching? We used a systematic review of the literature that included twenty-two peer reviewed articles. 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.

Conclusively, student-teachers' experiences in teacher education as discussed in this study with reference to underlying themes within teacher education, are important for student-teachers' commitment to teaching. In this way, we assert that teacher education is an important factor that could be used to build a strong foundation of student-teachers' commitment to teaching which could be a shield against commitment problems in their future teaching career path. Teacher educators could plan and execute activities in a way that purposely focus on enhancing (among other things) student-teachers' commitment to teaching.

Chapter 6 provided summaries of the four studies comprising this dissertation, highlighting aspects of the methods, findings and discussions of each study. In addition, we addressed potential study limitations in terms of the use of questionnaire, the way teacher education is measured and issues of generalizability.

Questionnaire is the main method of data collection used in Study 1 and 2. Despite its limitations, we still found it to be the most appropriate method for data collection in our study, not only because we aimed at reaching many student-teachers (about 4,750) but also because it is a suitable way to examine issues related to feelings and perceptions.

In investigating factors related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching we included student-teachers' 'Satisfaction with the teacher education programme' variable in the model. As we aimed at explaining general factors related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching, 'Satisfaction' was one of many variables we found important to include in the model. In the systematic literature review study we provide more detailed information about underlying themes within teacher education that are related to student-teachers' commitment to teaching. Thus, we recommended that future research could include a more in-depth study about the underlying themes within teacher education that could give additional insights into understanding the relationship between

components of the teacher education programme and student-teachers' commitment to teaching.

Moreover, we indicated that in some way, conclusions made from this dissertation may be limited in their generalizability as the studies were conducted in one university in one country, Tanzania. However, findings from this dissertation are not different from studies conducted in other contexts, thus, although we acknowledge that this research has limited generalizability, yet some generalization can be made, for example with other countries that have similar features as Tanzania regarding issues related to motivation for teaching and the status of the teaching profession.

Finally, we concluded that student-teachers' learning experiences (i.e. attitudes towards the teaching profession, attitude towards their teaching subject and satisfaction with the teacher education), perceived support of significant others and sense of self-efficacy are important variables related to their commitment to teaching. 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. Most of these issues can be addressed in teacher education. Although teacher education could have limited influence in some aspects, yet we emphasise that in other aspects teacher education has a very important role to play in order to enhance student-teachers' commitment to teaching. We conclude with recommendations for policy makers regarding selection procedures for teacher education candidates.