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REASONS FOR JOINING THE TEACHING PROFESSION: PRIMARY STUDENT TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT *This study explored student teachers' reasons for joining the teaching profession. A sample of the student teachers of the University of Otago, College of Education participated in this study, responding to a questionnaire aimed at identifying their reasons for choosing teaching as their career. Analysis of the data showed that a large percentage of student teachers enrolled in the institution demonstrated a strong desire to become a teacher, and that only a small percentage of them were ambivalent about teaching as their career choice. In terms of their future plans, the results indicated that the majority of student teachers had a desire to work abroad. Based on the results, the paper also draws implications that may be relevant for other jurisdictions in the Pacific region and beyond.*

KEYWORDS

Student teacher education, career choice, commitment to teaching

INTRODUCTION

For a successful career in teaching one needs to have a strong appreciation of the multidimensional nature of teachers' roles. Also, in this day and age the roles and responsibilities of teachers have become more demanding as they are expected to cope with various pressures at work, which come from almost all directions. In light of the myriad demands of work expected of teachers, it is essential that entrants possess suitable personal qualities and teaching-related attributes in order to become effective practitioners. Without genuine desire to be a teacher, they are likely to lack motivation and commitment, which could adversely impact the quality of educational provision and in turn children may not accrue optimum benefits from schooling. Therefore, it is of critical importance that entrants recruited have a strong wish to learn about the nature of teachers' roles and through their professional training and learning become talented and dedicated to their work. Their underlying reasons for entering the teaching profession will in turn determine their orientation to performing the core business of teaching and learning as well as adjunct roles and responsibilities. Seen in this light, that is, the teacher as the key to children's educational success, it is important to explore student teachers' underlying reasons for entering the teaching profession.

BACKGROUND

According to Wideen, Mayer-Smith and Moon (1998), the qualities and beliefs of those entering the teaching profession have an impact on their professional preparation and in turn their support for teaching. Over a sustained period research literature substantiates that one needs to have a strong emotional dimension in order to have a successful career in teaching (Bastick, 2000; Fried, 1995; Hargreaves, 1998; Hochschild, 1983; Nias, 1989; Sears, Marshall, & Otis-Wilborn, 1994; Richardson & Watt, 2006; OECD, 2006). Those who can emotionally engage themselves in the teachers' world of work are needed for the teaching profession. This is because "teachers relate to their charges in a way which is qualitatively different from other professions, such as medicine" (Hackett, 2000, p. 42). According to Nias (1989), good teaching is carried out by teachers when it is infused with pleasure, passion, creativity, challenge and joy. She further commented on the relationship to the children in terms of care, affection and even love. In this regard, a commitment to the well-being of others is important. Hochschild (1983) calls this an emotional labour. Thus those who are weak on the emotional dimension may not perform well or may leave the profession altogether. When undertaking an emotional activity one must have a feeling of wanting to do good for others and show calmness and concern but not anger. Those entrants with such qualities will identify working with children as the most enjoyable aspect of their work. The desire to provide service to young people is regarded as the most valued quality of a teacher (Sears, Marshall, & Otis-Wilborn, 1994). Those possessing altruistic characteristics are likely to do well and will enhance schoolwork and children's education generally (Sizer, 1984).

As far back as the 1940s, a study by Hale (1949) conducted in Australia showed that the entrants had the following reasons for joining the teaching profession: liking school life, liking for teaching, the need for a salary to continue one's own education and a liking for children. With reference to North American literature, Richardson and Watt (2006) reported the following as reasons for people joining the teaching profession: the desire for social mobility, the influence of parents and extended family, time compatibility, the need for a stimulating absorbing career, an ability to influence others, the desire to work with young children and adolescents, to work in a people-oriented profession, and job-related benefits such as security, pensions and vacations. Generally speaking, the reasons from the 1940s through to the early part of the twenty-first century have not changed much. The reasons advanced demonstrate teaching-related abilities and an overall appreciation of the teaching profession and what teaching is. Such motives for joining the profession help teachers to do their work well and contribute towards improving the delivery of quality educational service to children. Attributes such as interest in working with children, appreciation of school life and dedication to work are vital in order to operate with effectiveness and success in the teaching service. On the other hand, those people who do not have a service-oriented disposition are unlikely to show strong commitment to their professional work and ultimately children's education could be affected.

Some studies point out that some student teachers reconsider their initial decision and quit teaching for another career after completing some school-based experience (Chapman, 1983; Jackson & Schuler, 2000). The school experience provides them with the opportunity to see for themselves whether they can cope with the demands of work expected of teachers. Hands-on experience of the teachers' world of work, then, is a good way for prospective teachers to make decisions whether to join the teaching profession. Even some of those initially keen experience considerable isolation, frustration and lack of recognition later in their teaching career, and as a result quit the teaching profession (Firestone & Bader, 1991). In her American study, Darling-Hammond (1990) found approximately 60 percent of teacher education graduates did not immediately enter the teaching profession after graduation. Similar results were also found by Cohen, Klink and Grama (1990, p. 12), who found that graduates "learned as a result of student teaching that the field was not for them". This shows that students develop impressions of careers from both direct and indirect experience and these guide their career choice. As noted by Sears, Marshall and Otis-Wilborn (1994), individuals' impressions of teaching shape and reshape projections of themselves in their future role as teachers.

Pay is regarded as another important influencing factor in determining whether one joins the teaching profession (Institute of Management, 1999; Thomas, 1975) and the status of a profession is also determined by the salary and conditions of service. With regard to the teaching profession, Johnson (1986, p. 60) stated that "[it] is denied the status and pay of other service professions like medicine and law". One of the reasons for young people in United Kingdom to not consider teaching as their career is because of low pay (Haydn, Cockburn, & Oliver, 2001; Nickell & Quintini, 2002). Thus students with higher academic achievement were attracted to other professions or occupations which offer better salaries, social status and opportunities for further advancement compared to the teaching profession. Shin (1995, p. 432) stated that "the best and brightest of the teaching force are being lured to business and industry where salaries are higher, particularly in the fields of Science, Maths and English". For men, economics play a significant role in their career choice (Darling-Hammond, 1990). This indicates that to entice male students to join teaching, the profession must also improve its pay and terms and conditions of employment.

In the 1980s it was reported that female teachers normally enter and remain in the teaching profession as it is convenient for the rearing of their families (Jamar & Ervay, 1983). Marshall, Sears and Otis-Wilborn (1987, p. 47), stated that "women at very early stages of their careers plan to take advantage of the presumed flexibility that teaching offers to have a family". This is consistent with the findings of a recent study involving British Asian women's choice of teaching as a career (Butt, MacKenzie, & Manning, 2010) and may be a reason why teaching has attracted more women than men in many countries. In addition, there are more females in the profession because the profession is perceived as "women's work". In Australia, for example, the proportion was 65 percent female teachers (Richardson & Watt, 2006). In the case of Fiji, the primary teaching service comprises about 60 percent female teachers (Lingam, 1996). Across the Pacific

region, there is a high proportion of female teachers at the primary level (Benson & Singh, 1993; Burnett & Lingam, 2007). Considering the myriad demands of work, it has been argued recently that the teaching profession needs a balanced "mix" in terms of both male and female entrants to cater for the diverse socio-cultural contexts in schools and communities especially the diverse range of student backgrounds (OECD, 2006).

In the contemporary world, the demands for change have intensified the work of teachers with no significant increase in remuneration and rewards, and as such its status in comparison with other professions has declined (OECD, 2006; Ramsey, 2000). Work intensification in turn calls for teachers to be multi-skilled in order to operate effectively. Pressure from governments on entry regulations due to market forces and privatisation is also affecting entry into the profession (OECD, 2006). It has been argued that to entice well-qualified people to join teaching and to show commitment to the job, adequate salaries need to be paid. In particular, teachers need to be paid better salaries to ensure successful implementation of various educational reforms (Bee & Dalton, 1995; Hargreaves & Lo, 2000).

Pratte and Rury (1991) argued that teaching is a profession, but they also point out that teaching is different from other professions that receive high public recognition. In fact they labelled it as craft profession and other professions as expert professions. This indicates that in the workplace the remuneration, social status and power of teachers are lower compared to those in expert professions like medicine and law. In the United Kingdom, however, the campaign *Use your head* run by the Teacher Training Agency demonstrated that the profession is mentally demanding (Richardson & Watt, 2006). Teachers should not be viewed as technocrats and public servants but as active, reflective scholars and empowered practitioners in schools (Nihlen, 1992). Entrants should therefore be aware that the profession is mentally demanding like other professions. Teachers need to be efficient, develop competence, master suitable techniques and possess the right kind of knowledge to effectively carry out the work inherent in teaching.

For some entrants teaching is a transitory activity, as pointed out by UNESCO (1996). This is especially true of those talented people who join teaching but often move to another more prestigious career with better pay and status (UNESCO, 1996). This implies that entrants to the teaching service with such motives are unlikely to show a strong desire to help children learn and, in turn, commit to a long-term career in teaching. Such entrants may have little appreciation of the norms and expectations of the teaching profession and what it entails.

Overall, Marshall, Sears and Otis-Wilborn (1987) identified four categories of students in relation to their commitment to teaching. These are reservationists, converts, traditionalists and mavericks. The traditionalists are service oriented, and they seriously consider teaching as their career option. As one respondent stated, "the need to teach is inside me" (p. 43). On the other hand, mavericks are not really motivated for a career in teaching and join because of other things such as the scholarship that may be on offer. The converts initially do not consider a career in teaching but once selected show strong commitment to the teachers' world of work. Reservationists, on the other hand, are not really sure whether or not to remain in teaching for long. As stated by a respondent, "I wanted to be a teacher before I

heard about the program, but [now] I am not sure. I have so many choices. What do I choose?" (Marshall, Sears, & Otis-Wilborn, 1987, p. 43).

The traditionalists and converts are the ones who express strong commitment to a career in teaching while the mavericks and reservationists demonstrate weak levels of commitment. For the mavericks and reservationists therefore, teaching is considered a likely "stepping stone" into another profession (Book, Freeman, & Brousseau, 1985). Williams (1988) pointed out that close family members and their former teachers influence the traditionalists to join the teaching profession. The study conducted by Lingam (2004) on student teachers at a teachers college in Fiji found that the majority of them were traditionalists, because they were genuinely interested in becoming teachers.

More recently, Richardson and Watt (2006) proposed a model to identify factors influencing students to join teaching. The model, Factors Influencing Teaching Choice (FIT-Choice), entails five major categories of factors: socialisation, task perception, self perception, values and fall-back career. Socialisation influences refer to aspects such as social dissuasion, prior teaching and learning experiences. Task perception refers to dimensions such as demands of teachers' work and return from work input. Self perception means individuals' perceived ability to teach. Value perception refers to personal and social utility values that the individuals perceive the profession can offer. Fall-back refers to individuals who have no other career options available and decide to enter teaching.

The foregoing exposition provides useful insights about entrants' reasons for choosing a career in teaching. Considering the valuable role teachers play in children's education, it is vital to investigate and determine the reasons for joining the teaching profession in different jurisdictions, and in this case, Dunedin in the South Island of New Zealand.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This research explores student teachers' reasons for pursuing a teaching career. The study examined the following key research question: What are the student teachers' reasons for choosing teaching as their career? In recent years several studies have been conducted on issues relating to the teaching profession. An international study conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2006) on teachers and teachers' work found several interesting results. Some countries were experiencing serious shortages of teachers and shortages occur when teachers quit to enter another career. The purpose of the study was to re-examine issues relating to teachers' pay, teacher recruitments and incentives for teachers to remain in the profession and even ways to entice students to join the teaching profession, with particular reference to New Zealand and the micro states of the Pacific. The present study could also lead other researchers to undertake further research on issues relating to teacher education such as teacher preparation, teacher induction and recruitment of students for teacher education.

STUDY CONTEXT

The study was conducted while the author was on sabbatical leave at the University of Otago, College of Education (UOCE) in Dunedin, New Zealand. The UOCE is a new creation resulting from a merger of Dunedin College of Education (DCE) and the University of Otago Faculty of Education in 2007 (University of Otago, 2007). Hitherto, both institutions were offering teacher education programmes. In fact the DCE has a long history of delivering teacher education programmes. It was established in 1876 for the purpose of training primary teachers. It provided the largest number of teachers needed in the South Island of New Zealand. Before the merger, the DCE expanded its role to offer undergraduate and postgraduate degrees in a range of teacher education programmes.

Apart from the Dunedin campus, the DCE had another campus in Invercargill known as the Southland campus, which is now also a part of the new UOCE. The University of Otago began offering its own teacher education programmes in the 1990s. Since the merger all teacher education programs are conducted at the UOCE. Prior to the amalgamation some joint collaborative efforts on the delivery of teacher education programmes were carried out by both the institutions. At the time of the research, the teaching staff of the previous DCE were still adjusting to the new demands of not only the three-year degree programme, the Bachelor of Teaching, but also the transition to university conditions of work.

METHOD

A survey questionnaire was used to gather data to answer the research question. As a large sample size was required, a survey was considered to be the best means of gathering data (Gay, 1992). The questionnaire consisted of a two-part survey and was designed to determine student teachers' reasons for joining the teaching profession. The questionnaire used was similar to one the author developed and employed with student teachers at Lautoka Teachers College, Fiji, to determine their motivations for joining the primary teaching service (Lingam, 2004).

The survey questionnaire was used with student teachers who were recently admitted into the pre-service Bachelor of Teaching (Primary) programme at the Dunedin campus. This cohort was the pioneer of the new degree programme delivered under the new arrangement at the Dunedin campus. The questionnaire was administered in the last lecture week of the first semester, 2008. The researcher introduced the questionnaire by explaining its purpose and how the results could assist teacher education providers, policy makers, and those who aspire to become primary teachers. The researcher personally distributed and collected the completed questionnaires. Confidentiality of the details of the participants was ensured; that is, the data obtained were treated in a way that protected the confidentiality and anonymity of the participants. This was also explained to the participants who volunteered to take part in the study.

The items in the survey questionnaire were prepared on the basis of a synthesis of the literature reviewed. In addition, the items were selected and constructed on the basis of the researcher's knowledge of the teaching profession. The researcher

served as a classroom teacher and later as a teacher educator in tertiary institutions. These work experiences at the school level and later as a teacher educator provided the researcher with the breadth and depth of knowledge about teachers and teaching as well as enabling the identification of issues that warranted investigation.

The questionnaire comprised two parts. Part I included 16 statements related to motives for entering the teaching profession. The student teachers were asked to rate each factor on a five-point Likert scale. This helped identify the most and least common factors influencing the student teachers to enter a teaching career. Part II gave opportunities to express views on the reasons that led them to join teaching, while also probing further the data obtained in the closed-ended questions. In addition, a final question asked about future plans after completing the teacher education programme. There was a high return rate of completed questionnaires: 97 (87%) of the total population of 112.

DATA ANALYSIS

Two sets of data were collected. The quantitative data set was analysed using a common statistical mean. The responses in the qualitative data set were grouped according to the reasons for choosing the teaching profession. These are presented on the basis of frequency counts. Likewise, the feedback on the student teachers' future plans was analysed on the basis of themes which emerged and these are presented on the basis of frequency counts.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Quantitative data: influencing factors

The student teachers were asked to rate each influencing factor on a five-point scale, that is, the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with each statement. Table 1 provides the summary of the results.

Table 1.   Factors influencing student teachers to join teaching

Rank	Influencing Factors	Mean
1	I like working with young children	4.80
2	I think teaching is a satisfying job	4.75
3	I think teaching is a valuable role to play in society	4.52
4	As a teacher there are opportunities to work closely with the community	4.38
5	Teachers can take up leadership roles in the community	4.12
6	I believe teachers have a high status in our society	4.04
7	The job of a teacher is very secure	3.85
8	Teaching is a learned profession	3.78
9	I like sharing information with others	3.73

10	I like to have authority	3.67
11	My parents would like me to be a teacher	3.63
12	The profession is well paid	3.11
13	The working day is short	2.81
14	My mother/father/brother/sister is a teacher and I want to be the same	2.74
15	I cannot think of anything else to do	2.73
16	I like the idea of long holidays	2.56

The table shows that most of the student teachers joined the teaching profession because they liked "working with young children", followed by perceptions that teaching was a "satisfying job". The least influencing factor was "like the idea of long holidays".

QUALITATIVE DATA

The student teachers were asked to "list and comment on two reasons which influenced you the most to join teaching". Several reasons emerged from the analyses of the data. The five most frequent responses in descending order were (a) liking to work with children (46%); (b) parents, peer or teacher influence (27%); (c) satisfying job (7%); (d) opportunities to travel and work abroad (5%); and (e) the job is secure (4%). Some examples of responses which provide evidence related to the above influences were selected and these are presented below.

Comments relating to liking to work with children included:

I worked in holiday programmes where I had to look after children for long periods of time which I found very satisfying and I found that I wanted to continue working with children.

I love children and interacting with them. I did not feel like there was any other job that I would actually love going to and it would hardly be like a job.

I really enjoy working with children, they are the way of the future.

Really enjoy working with children passing on knowledge and watching children develop skill and knowledge from what I have taught them.

These comments indicate that parents, peers or teachers influenced them to select teaching as a career:

I have always wanted to be a teacher from a young age and because both of my parents were once teachers. I have grown up in a family which has always had links to schools and education.

Friends and family all knew that I wasn't sure about what I wanted to be and suggested that I would be good at teaching.

This is the second [programme] that I have enrolled in at the university, my first being health sciences first year, the course to get

into medicine, dentistry etc. I was not at all satisfied with the course and had always wanted to teach but was told I was too intelligent to teach which put me off. My friends and family encouraged me to go [primary teaching] and I am absolutely loving it.

I am not sure I would have had the confidence to pursue a teaching career had it not been for other people saying I would be good at it, their comments influenced my decision to enter teaching in a major way.

I have always been around children as I had a steady babysitting role in my home town. My mum is also a teacher so I got to go in and see Mum's class in action and loved seeing what they get up to.

My new entrant teacher was absolutely awesome. I started wanting to be a teacher when I was five and when I had her it made me really want to be a teacher.

Other comments regarded teaching as a satisfying job:

I think it will be a satisfying job as there are so many children that are misunderstood and I want to be able to help them. I will enjoy making a difference to children.

Teaching would be a valuable way to spend my life.

Some felt that teaching would enable them to travel and work abroad:

It can open opportunities overseas [such as] teaching English in Asia.

I want to travel and it is apparently easy to get a job as a teacher overseas.

The following were some of the comments which indicated that some student teachers were motivated to enter teaching because of job security:

It is a secure job if you have good reports.

Because of job security.

Other reasons for choosing teaching as a career were long holidays, opportunities to work closely with the community, opportunity to gain additional qualifications, had no other choice, increase the number of male teachers, and convenient for bringing up a family.

FUTURE PLANS

Aside from reasons for joining the teaching profession, the student teachers were asked also to indicate their future career plans. Analysis of the data indicated three main intentions for the future. In terms of frequency from highest to lowest, these were overseas teaching assignments (60%), to become quality teachers (25%), and to take up specialised training (10%). Plans to go and teach in overseas countries are demonstrated in these comments:

I would like to teach in NZ for a couple of years after graduating then move to either Australia or England to further my career.

> I would like to teach overseas sometime during my career. I am glad teaching is a global career that can take me to places.

> I wish to teach overseas and help out in third world countries to get education systems up and running around the globe. This will give future generations a better life.

> I would love to travel and teach in the UK, Canada, US, Asia and to do some volunteer work in Africa will be great experiences.

> I would love to work overseas at one stage ... I will teach a few years in New Zealand and then move overseas to teach as it will be a new experience.

> Do a couple of years in New Zealand and then travel abroad for better money and experience and travel.

> I plan to go overseas to teach.

> I think I will go overseas and teach as there are more opportunities and better pay than in New Zealand.

> Stay in New Zealand for five years and then move to London and teach over there.

> I would like to move to Australia when I finish my degree.

> I love to go travelling when I graduate. Jobs are always in demand around the world.

The following response demonstrates an intention to become a specialist teacher in future:

> I want to branch out into special education tutoring and reading recovery in special needs education.

> I want to become a school counsellor.

In addition, a small number of student teachers had other plans for their future such as the desire to teach in either rural or urban schools.

DISCUSSION

The study explored student teachers' reasons for joining the teaching profession. The findings of the study lend support to the findings of Marshall, Sears and Otis-Wilborn (1987). A large proportion of student teachers in the present study could be referred to as "traditionalists". The ratings for each influencing factor (Table 1) indicated that these student teachers were serious about taking up teaching as their career choice. They indicated a favourable impression of teaching such as liking to work with young children (4.80); teaching is a satisfying job (4.75); teaching is a valuable role to play in the society (4.52); opportunities available to work closely with the community (4.38); can take up leadership roles in the community (4.12) and teachers have a high status in our society (4.04). Some of these reasons for entering teaching were similar to those reported as far back as the 1940s (Hale, 1949). The influencing factor "like the idea of long holidays" was the most lowly

ranked (2.56) because the majority of the student teachers may be aware that teachers' work goes beyond the official working hours and days.

Likewise, student teachers' responses to the open-ended questions showed a large proportion of them appeared to be genuinely interested in the teaching profession. Liking children was again cited as the most common reason to join primary teaching. This is the most valued quality of a teacher, as suggested in the literature (Bastick, 2000; Sears, Marshall, & Otis-Wilborn, 1994). Upon taking up a teaching position such teachers are more likely to be dedicated and committed to their professional work of providing the best possible education for children. Influence from close family members and teachers was followed by "liking for children" in the free response section. This is in line with the positive socialisation influences as suggested in the literature (Richardson & Watt, 2006; OECD, 2006). Observing their own teachers, student teachers may have formed a positive impression that teaching would be their career of choice. This is in agreement with the views expressed by Sears, Marshall and Otis-Wilborn (1994) and Williams (1988).

It is interesting to note that the findings of this study (Table 1) do not support the findings of a United Kingdom study where pay was considered as the significant factor for people to join the teaching profession (Haydn, Cockburn, & Oliver, 2001; Nickell & Quintini, 2002). Pay ranked twelfth in the responses to the open-ended question. Even though pay was not directly mentioned by most student teachers in the open-ended questions as a reason for joining the profession, their future plans indicate the majority hope to move into situations with better pay and conditions. Australia and United Kingdom appeared to be the most favoured destinations. The United Kingdom and Australia are much more industrialised and have a more buoyant economy than New Zealand with better opportunities for teachers in terms of pay and working conditions. Consequently, student teachers' intention to go and teach in countries abroad could be due to better economies and in turn better remuneration packages (Darling-Hammond, 1990). This could lead to an imbalance in teacher supply and demand and subsequently recruiting teachers from neighbouring countries such as Fiji, Samoa and Tonga. Despite the United States' large economy and population, none of the participants mentioned going to teach there. The perceived difficulties of the task in that context or low salaries could possibly be the answer (Darling-Hammond, 1990). Overall, mobility of teachers between countries is growing (OECD, 2006).

On the whole, a relatively small proportion of student teachers in the sample were not eager to join the profession. For example, some were using the profession as a "stepping stone" to more lucrative jobs or to "enjoy long holidays". This is consistent with the views reported in international literature (UNESCO, 1996). Similarly, based on the ratings (Table 1) a small proportion of student teachers had other reasons for joining the teaching profession. For example, the ratings for statements on liking authority, not being able to think of an alternative and liking long holidays (10, 15, 16) reflected this. A student teacher with such reasons may not possess the attributes befitting a teacher or the teaching profession as a whole. Such student teachers could be labelled as "mavericks" and "reservationists", as suggested in the literature (Book, Freeman, & Brousseau, 1985). It is possible that

these student teachers did not initially consider undertaking a teacher education programme and teaching is a fallback career for them (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

As pointed out earlier, some of the data collected in the closed-ended questions were followed up to gain a more in-depth understanding of a particular item of interest to the researcher. It was found that parents, family and teachers had somewhat less influence than the student teachers' notions of the teaching profession. But when all these people were considered as the "significant others" who could influence a person to choose teaching as a career, there seems to be some definite influence on the choice of teaching. This is evident in their ranking of the influence of parents, peers and their teachers second in the responses to the open-ended question. In a general sense, student teachers viewed the profession of their choosing as having "to work with young children". This view ranked first in both the closed-ended and open-ended responses. Overall the responses gathered from the student teachers through open-ended and closed-ended items showed a strong positive appreciation for the teaching service.

IMPLICATIONS

The findings from this study are important and therefore warrant the attention from all with a vested interest in teacher workforce planning. At a time when some countries are experiencing a serious shortage of teachers, appropriate steps need to be taken to plan the supply of teachers to meet the demand in all jurisdictions; otherwise imbalances in teacher supply and demand could arise. Some countries have recruiting agencies for teachers in place. If New Zealand recruited teachers from the small island states in the Pacific, then a "brain drain" of teachers would incur huge costs to these low income countries.

Given that a large proportion of student teachers demonstrated a positive desire to join the teaching profession, the authorities concerned should not be complacent but try to further strengthen those areas identified in the present study to make the profession more attractive, such as provision of better pay and working conditions. The findings confirm that a small proportion of student teachers seemed to lack interest in a teaching career. Such student teachers may not take the professional preparation programme seriously; that is, they would not demonstrate receptiveness during their preparation and later may not demonstrate strong commitment to teaching and ultimately could adversely affect children's learning outcomes.

It could be argued that teacher educators could use appropriate means to mould student teachers so that they become interested in the profession. The whole student programme, that is, the theoretical and practical components, should further motivate student teachers to adequately prepare themselves for work in the school system. To ensure better quality teachers entering the profession, the policies governing recruitment of students could be further streamlined to ensure only those who are really motivated are admitted into New Zealand initial teacher education. This would be a proactive move to weed out those not interested in the profession.

As suggested in the literature over many years, selection should be an ongoing educational process rather than a one-shot exercise at the initial point of entry to a programme (Haberman & Stinnett, 1973; McPherson, 2002). Because teachers play

a crucial role in the lives and learning of children and communities, it is important to consider the sort of people suited to the teaching profession especially at the primary school level. They need to be well qualified and have suitable attributes to contribute positively to the development of education. In New Zealand, school boards do the "hiring and firing" of teachers, and as such schools could put in place appropriate measures to hire only those teachers deserving teaching positions. Also, instead of focusing on the New Zealand context and for the purpose of registration by the New Zealand Teachers Council, preparation of teachers should be broad based to enable prospective teachers to effectively operate in other educational contexts. Acknowledging the need for global currency in the teacher education programmes would be a step in the right direction. Although not directly related to the present research, gender "mix" is an area of concern as there was a preponderance of females in the study sample. Appropriate measures need to be in place to attract more male entrants to the primary teaching profession, provided there is evidence that more males means more positive schooling for students. Like the United Kingdom, other countries need to campaign to entice students (male and female) to join the teaching profession (Richardson & Watt, 2006).

Thus the findings of the study also have implications for other teacher education providers as well as further research. Although this study represents the reasons student teachers of UOCE join the teaching profession, it could be assumed that entrants to other teacher education institutions within and beyond New Zealand may have similar reasons. Further investigation is needed in this area. Follow-up research would be helpful. After some years of teaching experience, the participants sampled in this study could be surveyed again to determine their perceptions of the profession over a period of time. This would help ascertain factors influencing them to remain in the profession.

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