Making the Teaching Profession Marketable in Changing Times – Perspectives from South Africa

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The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that attract students to join the teaching profession, the negative aspects of the teaching profession that may discourage students from joining the profession, and their perspectives on how the teaching profession can be made more attractive. Data was collected using mixed methods, where questionnaires comprising of both open-and closed-ended questions were distributed to teacher education students (n= 127) at a University of Technology in South Africa. The results indicate that serving the community and the quest to transfer knowledge was the main reason why the students chose to join the teaching profession. The main factor discouraging students from joining the teaching profession was lack of respect shown by learners in schools. Lastly, the teaching profession can be made more attractive by equipping the schools with the necessary resources to aid in the teaching and learning process in schools. The study found that the teaching profession is still attractive, despite the challenges faced by teachers in handling ill-discipline among students. Provision of resources in schools can be a great catalyst in attracting prospective and potential teachers to the profession.

INTRODUCTION

The teaching profession has been hailed as one of the key contributors to the economy of a country. According to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations, education is the leading element that can create positive changes in the world. It is therefore in the interest of all stakeholders that globally, every child should have access to education by the year 2030 (UNESCO, 2012). For this to be achieved, there should be adequately trained and equipped teachers who will be trained to facilitate teaching and learning in all the corners of the world. According to the South African Council for Educators (2010), in South Africa, the

supply of newly qualified teachers is less than the number of vacant teaching posts available. Recent statistics indicate that the number of new teachers required to replace the teachers leaving the system was between 20 000 and 30 000 while higher education institutions only produced 15 655 graduates (De Villiers, 2017). In addition, it is estimated that there will be a substantial increase in the number of learners enrolled in schools in South Africa by the year 2023, and therefore a consequent increase in teacher demand (CDE, 2015). In this light, there was a call by the South African Council for Educators' (SACE) CEO to increase the number of students admitted to study teaching, to meet the need for teachers in specific areas in the country (Govender, 2016). However, the teaching profession in emerging countries is unpopular, with low salaries and benefits, and being one of the professions that people fall back on, not having qualified for their priority courses. There have been extensive studies on why teachers join the teaching profession (Low et al., 2015; Gomes and Palazzo, 2017; Seker et al., 2015). Surprisingly, the issue of what could be done to make the teaching profession attractive has been overlooked. Therefore more attention and interventions are required to make it attractive and marketable to the younger generation. This is the focus of this study.

The study was guided by the following research questions

1.   What factors attract students to join the teaching profession?
2.   What are the negative aspects of the teaching profession that may discourage the students from joining the profession?
3.   How can the teaching profession be made more attractive?

The sections below first present a theoretical framework on motivation and job satisfaction, followed by the research methodology and data analysis techniques. The last sections present and discuss the significant findings and implications of the study.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Motivators and dissatisfiers of the teaching profession

Job satisfaction has been an issue of concern for researchers due to its influence on turnover, absenteeism and productivity levels. According to Louw and Venter (2013), job satisfaction represents a combination of positive or negative feelings that workers have towards their work: these positive and favourable attitudes towards the job indicate job satisfaction, while negative and unfavourable attitudes towards the job indicate job dissatisfaction (Armstrong, 2018). Job satisfaction is also a person's internal response to working conditions (Gkolia, Athanasios and Koustelios, 2014) and therefore relates to values, norms and expectations of a person (Hellriegal et al, 2017). According to Dinham and Scott (2000), job satisfaction is affected by different motivators and is therefore based on the theory of human motivation. Although there are many theories to explain motivation for job satisfaction and factors that lead to employees being interested in a particular job, Herzberg's two factor theory is applied in this study.

According to Hellriegal et al. (2017), Herzberg's two factor theory identifies aspects of the job and organizational contexts that contribute to satisfaction and motivation. Two aspects of the job environment are responsible for creating feelings of job satisfaction and dissatisfaction; these are motivator and hygiene factors. Motivator factors are aspects of the job contexts that create positive feelings among employees and determine whether a job is exciting or rewarding, while hygiene factors are the non-task characteristics of the work environment that create dissatisfaction. These include aspects such as working conditions, salaries, and relationships with co-workers, among others (Louw and Venter, 2013).

Students' choice of career is influenced by many factors, among them their experiences and perceptions regarding job characteristics, and benefits that may accrue from that profession. These reasons consequently are associated with how satisfied they will be in their jobs, leading either to job satisfaction or job dissatisfaction. Studies relating to reasons why teaching is chosen as a career have been carried out globally, with mixed results. For instance, BRNFER (2019) conducted studies in Wales and concluded that among undergraduates, motivators to teaching included making a positive impact on pupils as well as long holidays, while the demotivators were related to the heavy workload of the profession. Ghenghesh (2013) conducted research at the British University in Egypt and identified that the highest motivators for engaging in the teaching profession were good working relationships and improved job responsibility, and the least motivators was pay and salary. On the other hand, although pay and remuneration was not a major motivator, it was the leading factor identified as the cause of dissatisfaction. In addition, Gomes and Palazzo (2017) conducted research with undergraduates at a higher institute of education in Brazil and found that motivating factors attracting them to the teaching career were emotional gratification associated with provision of a service to society, while low salaries and social devaluation were motives for dissatisfaction. Another study by Low et al. (2017) in Australia on reasons for teaching found that intrinsic values, such as interaction with students and making a difference in society, created a sense of job satisfaction and therefore motivated students to join the teaching career. The same results were found by Bedel (2016) in a study withpre-service teachers in Turkey, which showed that students decided to join teaching because they were academically motivated, and that this would give them job satisfaction. Other reasons for choosing teaching as a career are linked to the aspect of altruism, where teaching is referred to as an assistance-oriented, humanitarian project associated with the wish to help the neighbour and contribute towards the improvement of education in the society.

There are other reasons that drive students to join the teaching career as well. According to Gomes and Palazzo (2017), students joined the teaching profession because they were offered scholarships, which has no relationship with job satisfaction. This is echoed by Govender (2016), who argues that high school teachers in South Africa could be opting for teaching because of the availability of the Funza Lushaka Bursary, an initiative by the Department of Basic Education in South Africa to encourage more young people to join the teaching career in order to fill the vacancies in rural areas. Noguera (2012), on the other hand, argues that

students' choice of courses and careers is an auto-selection concept. This means that they choose courses that are compatible with their socio-economic and academic characteristics. In contrast, Mbunyuza (2016) argues that teaching is seen by most young people as a career for people without other options and that the reasons for them joining the teaching profession are not about motivating or demotivating factors of the job. This however has been disputed by a study in Turkey by Topkaya and Uztosun (2012), who found that the choice of teaching by undergraduate students was voluntary rather than a fall-back career as purported by Mbunyuza.

Marketing the teaching career

It has been widely established that the teaching profession suffers from a poor image among the public and students (Burns and Darling-Hammond, 2014). This is because of the dissatisfaction factors attributed to the profession, teachers' and students' experiences, as well as poor publicity attached to it by the media. According to Armstrong et al. (2018), improving the image of the profession is advocated as one of the ways of salvaging and attracting students to join the profession, given the poor media publicity. To achieve and change the poor image of the profession, improvements in pay and benefits, working conditions and provision of resources is advocated (Kenal, 2013). Studies have shown that these factors can help attract more people into the teaching profession. For instance, a study in Colorado USA found that measures to make the teaching profession attractive included increasing benefits and compensation. Similarly, Bland, Church and Luo (2014) have argued that low expected earnings in teaching relative to other professions can deter people from pursuing a teaching career. In contrast, a study in Egypt by Abdelfattah (2010) showed that increase in pay did not contribute to schoolteachers' job satisfaction.

Working conditions play a major role in deciding to join the teaching profession. Improvements in working conditions, especially in rural areas and disadvantaged communities which have poor facilities, can help improve the image of the profession (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ingersoll, 2002; Seker et al., 2015; Low et al., 2011). According to Burns and Darling-Hammond (2014), teachers have traditionally reported that class size is one of the teaching conditions that matters to them in their efforts to meet the needs of their students. In addition, there is a significant correlation between shortages of instructional resources and lower teacher salaries, suggesting that these are indicators of broader resource concerns. Podolsky et al., (2016) argue that the teaching profession requires re-structuring, to identify and reward high performers with upward trajectories in terms of increased responsibility and status, as is the case with other professions. Despite the negativity associated with the teaching profession, a study commissioned by the European Commission (EC)found that student teachers were not concerned with the poor image of the profession, however they advocated that the value of the teaching profession be communicated to the society using media and other avenues (BRNFER, 2019). In addition, information about the teaching profession should be disseminated to schools and universities to encourage students to join the profession (Thornton and Reid, 2002). In a

study conducted by BRNFER (2019), students indicated that putting campaigns on TV and advertising the incentives of teaching were also means of marketing the teaching profession. According to Symeonidis (2015), there is a need to increase and market the teaching profession to attract and retain the best quality teachers. This can be done through ensuring that there is professionalism exhibited by the in-service teachers. In addition, ensuring that the teaching environment is safe for both teachers and learners could make the profession attractive to the young generation. Teacher recruitment methods were also identified as a factor to make the profession attractive. This factor can be regarded as crucial for the profession's attractiveness for at least two reasons. Firstly, it is important to recruit teachers with the academic competencies and social skills required for teaching groups, establishing positive contact with pupils, and motivating their pupils to study. This is a prerequisite to ensure that teachers like their jobs and stick with them (Moran et al., 2002; Barmby, 2006; Bielby et al., 2007; Donaldson, 2012).

To curb the poor image of the teaching profession, recruitment and image building campaigns are key in order to entice students into the teaching profession. According to the EC (2013), in countries where the teaching profession has a very positive image, there is hardly any shortage of qualified teachers. The image of teachers is seen as an important aspect that may influence the profession's attractiveness either negatively or positively (Lazar, 2010). The impact of a negative image is bound to affect the number of students who deliberately choose to become teachers, while the positive effects depicted in the media will encourage an increase in the number of students who wish to join the teaching profession.

METHODOLOGY

The study used mixed methods where questionnaires comprising of open- and closed-ended questions were used to gather information from pre-service teachers majoring in Economics and Management Sciences (EMS) disciplines.

Participants

The study participants comprised Economics and Management Sciences (EMS) pre-service teachers from first to third year of university. The total population was 160 students. Simple random sampling was used. Responses were gathered from 127 students.

Questionnaire design

The questionnaire, comprising of both open- and closed-ended questions, was designed then distributed to the participants. The first part (section A) related to demographics of the respondents, gender and age. The next section required the respondents to indicate if teaching, and particularly Economics and Management Sciences, was their first choice of career. Open-ended questions were asked to determine reasons as to why the respondents were attracted to

teaching and what aspects should be taken into consideration in order to make teaching an attractive profession. Section B consisted of closed-ended questions regarding various reasons as to why the respondents chose teaching as a career.

Analysis and presentation of the results

Open-ended responses were analysed in terms of thematic content where responses were grouped into themes. Closed-ended questions were analysed using histograms, means and exploratory factor analysis. Exploratory factor analysis was used in order to reduce data to a smaller set of summary variables and to explore the underlying theoretical structure of the reasons why respondents joined the teaching program.
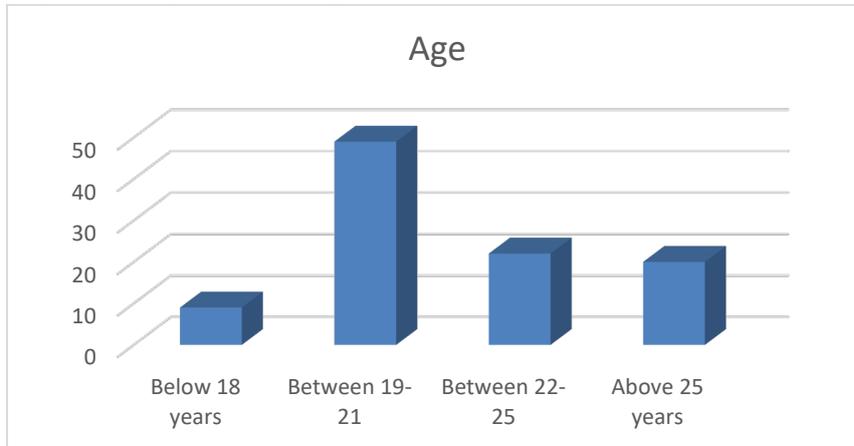
RESULTS

The results are presented in line with the main objectives of the study, which were to investigate factors that attract students to join the teaching profession, the negative aspects of the teaching profession that may discourage students from joining the teaching profession, and their perspectives on how the teaching profession can be made more attractive.

Figure 1: Gender
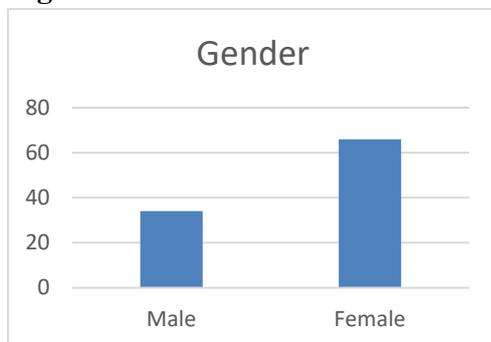
Results indicated that more females (66%) than males (34%) took part in the study. This also reflects the enrolment of the students in the program, where there are more females than males.
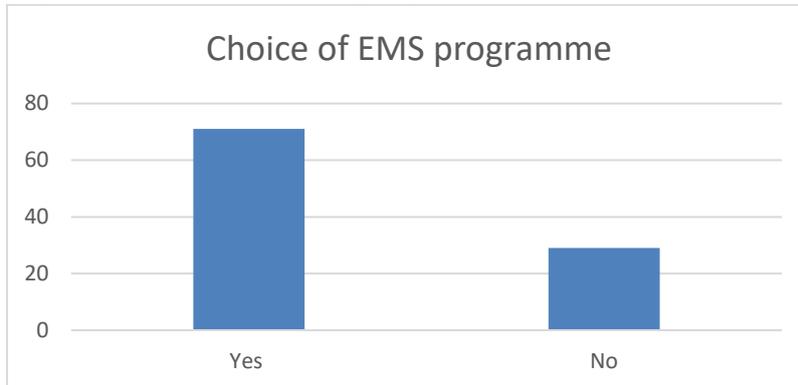
Figure 2: Age of the respondents

Results indicated that the majority of the respondents were between the ages of 19-21 (49%); ages 22-25 made up 22% of the respondents; 20% were mature students, older than 25 years; while 9% of the respondents were below 18 years old. This concurs with the majority age of university students in South Africa as most join the university directly from high school.

Figure 3: Year of study
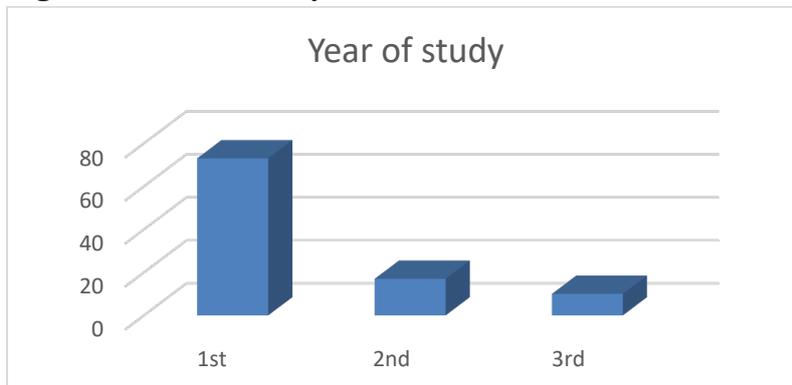
Results indicated that the majority of the respondents were students in their first year of the program (73%), followed by second year students (17%), then third year students (10%).

Figure 4: Choice of EMS program

Responses indicated that the majority (71%) chose the EMS program as their first choice when applying for their courses at the university, while 29% said they did not choose EMS as their first choice of study.

Figure 5: Dream career of the respondents
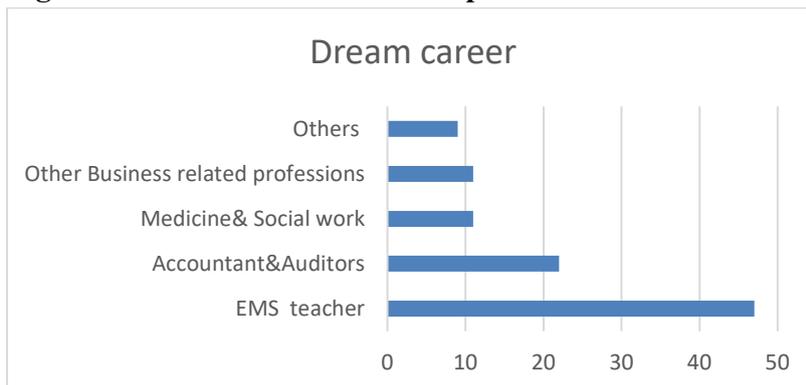

This question was an open-ended question. It asked the respondents to indicate what their dream career was. The responses were analysed in themes, and the majority indicated that their dream career was to become EMS teachers (47%), followed by accounting and auditing careers (22%), medicine and social work (11%), other business related professions (11%), and others (9%).

**Figure 6: Motivation factors for teaching profession**
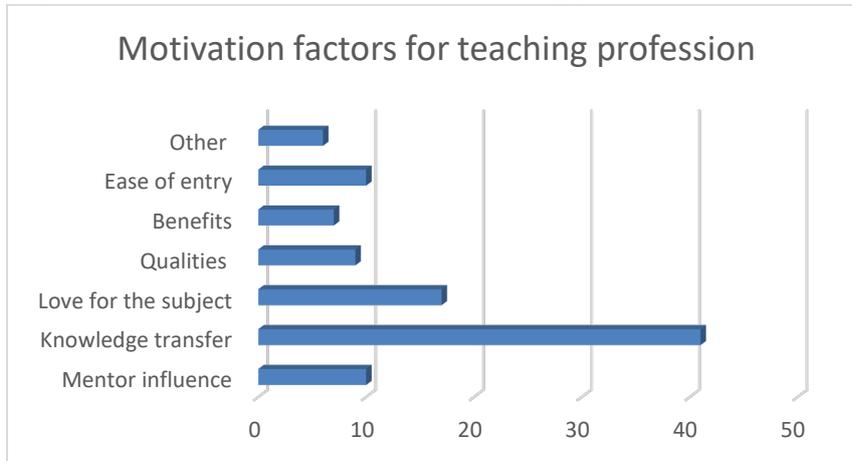
The responses from this open-ended question indicated that the majority of the respondents joined the teaching profession in order to transfer knowledge to others (41%), followed by love for the subject (17%), influence by high school teachers and ease of entry into the teaching profession (10%), pay and benefits (7%), and other (6%).

Figure 7: Demotivators of the teaching profession
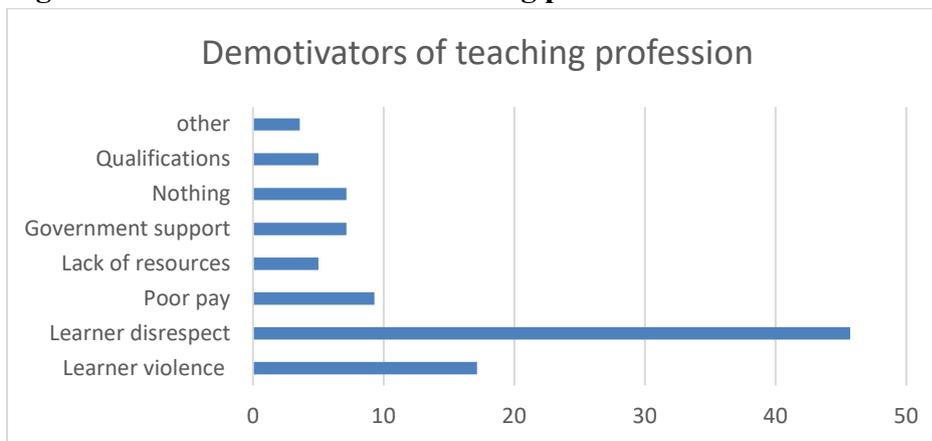
Responses on reasons that might make respondents demotivated with the teaching profession showed that learner disrespect was listed by the majority (46%), followed by learner violence (17%), poor pay (9%), government support (7%), lack of teaching qualifications, and lack of resources (5%).

Figure 8: Making the teaching profession attractive
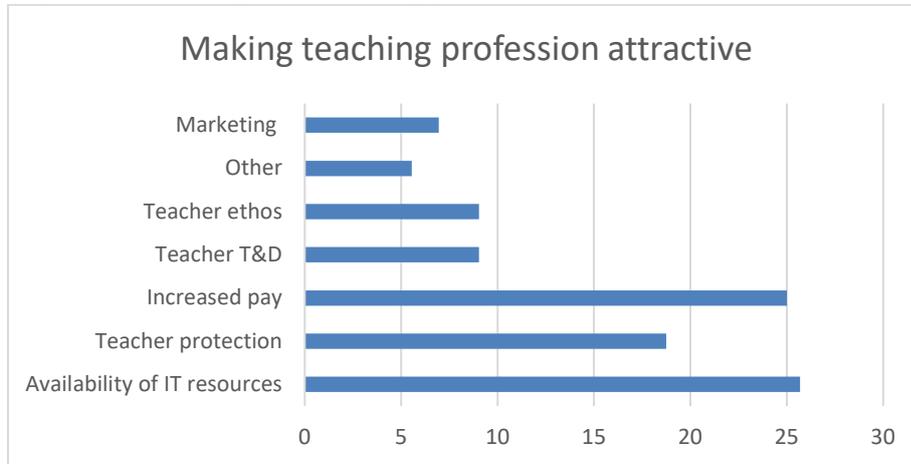
In the responses to this open-ended question, the majority of the respondents indicated that the teaching profession can be made attractive through ensuring that there is availability of resources, especially IT (26%), followed by increased pay for the teachers (25%), ensuring that the teachers are protected (19%), ensuring that teachers are trained and developed and ensuring that teachers act professionally (9%), marketing the teaching profession (7%), and other (6%).

Figure 9: Rotated component matrix of the factors for joining the teaching profession

Factor loadings					
	Component				
Variables indicating reasons why respondents joined the teaching program	1	2	3	4	5
V1. Teaching was the best job among those jobs most readily available to me	.714				
V2. I enjoy being around the school environment	.649				
V3. I feel a personal "calling" to teach	.641				
V4. I would like to work with young people	.470				
V5. I am more comfortable with children than with adults		.841			
V6. I love children		.712			
V7. I have enjoyed working with children in other contexts, and felt teaching would be enjoyable		.696			
V8. Teaching is a fulfilling and challenging occupation			.763		
V9. Teaching allows me to perform a valuable service of moral worth			.741		
V10. Teaching gives me a chance to "pay back" the good teachers I have had			.609		
V11. I will have a chance to make a good salary				.770	
V12. Teachers have nice benefits associated with their jobs				.763	
V13. The time schedule will be compatible with my home situation					.838
V14. I like the work hours and vacation time					.507

Figure 9 indicates the grouping of different statements showing reasons why respondents decided to join the teaching program The statements were grouped into five main categories which measured similar items. The categories were given themes: job enjoyment (variables 1-4); love for children (variables 5-7); service to society (variables 8-10); salaries and benefits (variables 11 and 12); and working hours and vacation time (variables 13 and 14).

Figure 10: Extracted means of reasons for joining the teaching programme

Reduced means indicating reasons for joining the teaching profession	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Job enjoyment	126	3.1640	.49944
Love for children	126	3.1376	.64432
Service to society	126	3.3360	.53249
Salaries and benefits	126	2.9325	.70243
Working hours and vacation time	126	3.1151	.63376

In the results, service to society emerged as the main reason why the respondents joined the teaching profession, followed by perceived enjoyment of the teaching profession, love for children, working hours and availability of vacation time, and salaries and benefits.

DISCUSSION

Motivating factors for join the teaching profession by the pre-service students

The love for knowledge transfer among student teachers emerged as the popular theme. This is an indication that they joined the teaching profession out of willingness and that they are ready to make an impact on the society. This intrinsic satisfaction is part of the job they will undertake, as teaching gives them the satisfaction of giving back to society. Therefore, they are motivated to engage in the profession due to gratification, regardless of pay and working conditions. Some of the responses include:

'As a teacher, you are the second parent to learners, so I chose this profession so that I can be able to give our generation and the next the right direction of life'.

'Getting a chance to upgrade South African education and make changes'.

'Making a living instilling knowledge into being so that their dream profession is familiar to them, and they are able to pursue it. It would make me sleep better at night knowing I played a role in someone's dream career'.

'Giving back to the community and enhancing knowledge of the African child'.

'The fact that I love working with the community developing others. I love children'.

'I feel that teaching is not only an occupation or a task but something that can change the entire viewpoint of a person'.

This observation is supported by the means of the closed-ended questions, whereby service to the society emerged with the highest mean. These findings are similar with findings by Low (2017) and Nfer (2019).

The least motivator for joining the teaching profession was pay and benefits associated with the profession, as indicated both in the open- and closed-ended responses. This is a clear indication that pay and benefits are not regarded as motivators for joining the teaching profession. This corresponds with studies by Ghengesh (2013), who conducted research at the British University in Egypt and identified that motivators for engaging in the teaching profession were good working relationships and improved job responsibility, and that pay, and salary were the least of the motivators. The present study also found that the majority of respondents indicated they had chosen teaching in EMS as their first choice of program when applying for university entrance, and that their dream career was to become EMS teachers.

Love for the subject was the next motivator for joining the teaching profession. This indicates that the students have chosen to use their knowledge to empower others instead of delving into other related professions, as evidenced by the responses below.

'I saw potential and I also started to see the skills that I have in EMS. My love for Economics made me realise that I had to do EMS'.

'It involves Accounting and I wanted to be an Accountant'.

'I love calculating and knowing what is happening through Economics'.

'Love for Economics and learning economic trends'.

De-motivators of the teaching profession

In the results from the open-ended question, statements about learner disrespect and violence emerged as the main demotivators of the teaching profession. The surge in school violence among students, especially in high schools in South Africa, is contributing to the unattractiveness of the career. The recent attacks, especially on teachers, has become a burning point which requires attention from the Department of Basic Education and school management. Although most research indicates poor pay and poor working conditions as demotivators for joining the teaching profession, results in this study indicate a different pattern. Some of the statements from the respondents in relation to the issue of learner violence are as follows:

'When the children in other schools disrespect their teachers or fight with them'.

'Violence among learners leading to death of teachers'.

'The abolishment of corporal punishment. The ill-treatment of teachers by learners and disregard by the department'.

'Lack of safety in schools'.

'Gangsterism. Failure of the government to protect teachers from the bad influence of the society'.

'The way learners at school treat the educators and the way they respond to them is not good. Learners who use vulgar language in classes'.

Making the teaching profession attractive

Results indicated that availability of resources would entice and make the teaching profession more attractive. This concurs with other studies (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Ingersoll, 2002; Seker et al., 2015; Low et al., 2011). Some of the statements in support of this were as follows:

'Teachers should be provided with resources to use in the class for free, like laptops and projectors'.

'More media resources should be made available for teachers so that their jobs can be easy'.

'Advance teaching in schools like bring advanced technology to schools'.

'The teacher ought to teach using projectors not chalkboard because children are now being exposed to technology world'.

'Learners to be introduced to new ways of learning using computers so that they can play and enjoy'.

'Provide the same resources that the schools in the urban areas have to the schools in the rural areas'.

'Adding technological resources to make the teaching profession more interesting'.

Increased pay was also advocated as a way of increasing and marketing the teaching profession. This concurs with Bland et al. (2014), who argue that low expected earnings in teaching can deter people from pursuing a teaching career. Teacher protection and promotion of teacher values also emerged as one of the ways of making the teaching profession more marketable. This is linked to the major demotivator of joining the teaching profession, of learner violence and disrespect. Statements to this effect were:

'Plans and rules to protect teachers against harmful students'.

'Make sure teachers are protected'.

Other statements of interest related to the behaviour and values of the teacher and were as follows:

'Teach future teachers about morals and self-respect'.

'Teacher personality must be good'.

'Teachers to be given recognition'.

'Making the education fashionable, educating more people about the importance of being a teacher'.

'There should be more presentations about the career'.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate factors that attract students to join the teaching profession, the negative aspects of the teaching profession that may discourage students from joining the profession, and their perspectives on how the teaching profession can be made more attractive. The study found that serving the community and the quest to transfer knowledge was the main reason why the students chose to join the teaching profession. The main factor that may discourage students from joining the teaching profession was violence and lack of respect shown by learners in schools. Lastly, the teaching profession can be made more attractive by equipping schools with the necessary resources to aid in the teaching and learning process. Another important finding to emerge from this study was that teachers require training on how to improve their teaching methods. This research confirms previous findings and contributes to our understanding of job satisfaction from the point of view of pre-service teachers in the South African context, where studies revealed different results from other countries.

The study has some limitations in that it was a case study of only one group of pre-service teachers in one institution of higher education. So, the results cannot be generalized to the whole of South Africa. The implication for this study is that it provides valuable insight for the government and Department of Education to implement policies that protect teachers from unruly learners at schools, as violence and learner disrespect came out as the largest demotivator of the teaching profession. In addition, measures should be taken by the various stakeholders in education, government, the Department of Education and school management in order to market the teaching profession.

Further research should be based on in-depth follow-up studies with newly appointed and long-serving teachers as to their insights on how the teaching profession can be made attractive, for comparison purposes.

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