

The Career Orientation of Final Year Teacher Training Students

M. G. Steyn¹ and G. D. Kamper²

*Department of Early Childhood Education, Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria,
Pretoria, South Africa*

¹*Fax: +27 865103243, E-mail: [1<mg.steyn@up.ac.za>](mailto:mg.steyn@up.ac.za), ²[2<kampergd9@gmail.com>](mailto:kampergd9@gmail.com)*

KEYWORDS Student Teachers. Teacher Morale. Teaching Profession. Teacher Retention. Professional Identity

ABSTRACT This research was prompted by the assumption that the many problems that South African education faces must have an adverse effect on the career orientation of student teachers. The ecosystemic theory of Bronfenbrenner was used as the theoretical framework. In establishing the conceptual framework, negative forces on the teachers are discussed, as these are eminent in societal expectations about teachers, their professional identity and the retention rate in the teaching profession. For the empirical study all the final year teacher training students at one of the largest universities in South Africa were requested to complete a questionnaire. These findings were verified in a focus group interview with five purposively selected respondents. The findings nullified initial assumptions. Not only were the students strongly committed to their chosen career, but they also conveyed a strong message about moral values and the teachers' roles in being models to those in and outside the school.

INTRODUCTION

The problems regarding education in South Africa have reached worrying proportions. As far back as 2008, a number of education experts issued a statement declaring unequivocally that the education system was in a state of major crisis that boded ill for the future (Rademeyer 2008). In 2010, the media reported that the education system in the Eastern Cape had largely collapsed as a result of thousands of teaching posts that had not been renewed, poor management in education, strikes, learning material that was not reaching schools and low morale amongst teachers. Other parts of the country currently experience similar problems and the vigorous debate about the credibility of the annual matriculation results illustrate the disturbing state that the education system finds itself in. During 2012, the South African education system reached a low point with the widely reported textbook scandal in the Limpopo Province and UNICEF (2014) South Africa reported that the South African education system's performance levels were lower than most other countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and that the system was characterized as "poor quality of education" (Spaull 2013: 3).

Address for correspondence:
Dr. M. G. Steyn
Department of Early Childhood Education
Faculty of Education, University of Pretoria
Pretoria, South Africa
Fax: +27 865103243
E-mail: mg.steyn@up.ac.za

Similarly, Cronje (2014) refers to the World Economic Forum who has ranked the quality of schooling in South Africa at 146th out of 148 countries, and furthermore states that education standards in South African schools lag far behind those of its BRICS partners. Although the Department of Basic Education has devised strategies to improve learner achievement, the educational role players are once again baffled by the very recent announcement (March 2015) of the Ministry of Education to involve teachers from China and Cuba to improve learners' achievement in mathematics, thereby displaying its vote of distrust in thousands of qualified teachers who are still in the system, or who have resigned because of poor salaries, lack of resources and unfavorable working conditions.

The issue of career welfare and the orientation of teachers as key role players in education become all the more pertinent against this background. Within the context of education and other socioeconomic problems that abound in South Africa, teachers hold the future of the country in their hands. De Wit (1981: 9) stated succinctly years ago that teachers deal with a nation's most valuable possession, namely, its youth. It therefore See ms superfluous to argue the unique, essential nature of their work—teachers are undeniably the chief exponents of the most significant, enduring values of Western civilization.

Objectives

The objectives of this research are two-fold:

- ♦ To examine the career enthusiasm of teacher training students who face a career where many schools are characterized by school-related violence and abuse and where, “27 percent of public schools do not have running water, 78 percent are without libraries and 78 percent do not have computers” (UNICEF 2014 Preface)
- ♦ To investigate the students’ moral values against the background of the lack of values of prominent leaders in the country, and to determine the kind of role models the students will be for the learner population.

Theoretical Framework

For a thorough understanding of the context in which teachers function, the ecosystemic theory was used as the point of departure. The notion *ecosystemic* indicates the mutual influence of various main systems and subsystems in organizations and society. For the purposes of this research, it was deemed necessary to consider the essential factors that have an impact on teachers’ working environment from an ecosystemic viewpoint as well as from the mutual interaction between those factors. The model of Bronfenbrenner (1990) as explained by Swart and Pettipher (2005) was used for this research. This model illustrates the ecosystemic theory in terms of society at large and indicates different levels or groups in the social context as systems. The functioning of these systems depends on the interaction between the various parts. These systems are the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem.

All of the above systems are important for research such as this paper. At macro-level the current political ideology determines the education policy. Samuel (2008: 6) is of the opinion that whereas many teachers were used during the apartheid years to undermine the education system through protest action, they often now act as agents to carry out the current government’s transformation policy. Social values still remain influential at macro-level and are revealed in, *inter alia*, a materialistic orientation regarding careers. In layman’s terms, careers that attract a high salary usually have a corresponding high social status.

The factors that have a more direct impact on the teacher are found at the exolevel. At this level the focus is on the perceptions of the community. The social identity of the teacher is

formed in relation to the broader community’s view of the profession (Hansen 2001: 1). Compared to other careers, the teaching profession has never been particularly attractive in terms of salary that predictably taints the status of the profession. Samuel (2008: 9) aptly notes “...in South Africa the opening up of the potential career possibilities for graduating school-leavers has lowered the esteem of teaching as a career”. Another important factor at exolevel is the provincial education department that has a major impact on the teacher through policy measures that may disempower teachers (for instance, in maintaining discipline) and put excessive administrative demands on them often without adequate support (Mohlala 2010).

The mesolevel deals with factors that the teacher has direct contact with on a daily basis. Examples are the often-changing curriculum, school principals whose autonomy is increasingly challenged and ill-disciplined learners who are very familiar with their rights.

The microlevel is crucially important. The teacher is an active role player in the immediate working environment (the classroom) and interacts with the surrounding systems (Swart and Pettipher 2005: 10).

In summary the ecosystemic model explains how “Umwelt” factors can decisively determine the experiences and perceptions of teachers. These factors manifest predominantly in societal perspectives and expectations regarding teaching and the teacher. The model offers a clear and visual explanation of contextual social forces and their interaction, and in the researchers’s opinion, it may serve as an effective contextual-theoretical framework for an empirical investigation into the life and career profile of teachers and teacher training students.

In view of the model, three aspects are highlighted as the conceptual framework of the research: the expectations of parents and society regarding teachers, the professional identity of the teacher, and the current retention ability of a teaching career in South Africa.

Conceptual Framework

Expectations of Parents and Society Regarding Teachers

Hansen (2001) emphasizes the conspicuous but often overlooked fact that the person (or humanity) of the teacher is the most important

factor in teaching. This variable has the greatest influence on the intellectual and moral quality of teaching. According to Chauncey (2005: 1), research repeatedly confirms the impact of teacher quality on the learning ability of children, "...more than class size, more than per pupil spending, more than the child's socio-economic background or previous academic performance".

However, the educational role of the teacher is increasingly abused. Samuel (2008: 9) points out that parents leave their children in the care of teachers, expecting the teachers to inspire and educate their children. Rademeyer (2008) accentuates the argument by stating that many schools are nothing more than education dumping grounds where parents hope that teachers will be able to deal with their children educationally as best they can. Pretorius (2008: 172) adds that nowadays education faces new challenges, namely to take on the responsibilities of institutions such as the church and family. Lovat and Nielsen (2009: 126) attribute the additional moral responsibility of the teacher to the failure of the family to model values such as personal integrity, social development, self-reflection and moral and spiritual awareness. According to Slater (2008), it has therefore become the moral obligation of the teacher to form the value systems of children, namely, what children consider as right, good and valuable. Osguthorpe (2008: 288) maintains that many research results confirm the link between the moral conduct of the teacher and the moral development of the child.

Society, moreover, has certain expectations from the teacher and their teaching. Pretorius (2008: 167) aptly states that the education system is expected to equip learners with experiences, skills and knowledge that will empower them to meet the demands of future communities. Declining economies are also pinning their hopes on education to bring about change and throughout history governments have considered teachers as agents of change. According to Samuel (2008: 8), South African teachers are regarded as "service providers" who bear the responsibility of realizing the aims and ideals of the state's transformation agenda.

Owing to unfulfilled transformation expectations, education systems worldwide are held accountable for social ills. Teachers are increasingly made scapegoats for not being able to realize the state and social objectives of education and the education system. The poor perfor-

mance of learners is also simplistically blamed on the teachers' inabilities (Samuel 2008: 6). According to the policy document titled Norms and Standards for Educators (Republic of South Africa 2000) that sets out the teacher's roles and competencies, teachers' duties extend far beyond their classroom practice. Samuel (2008: 6) states that teachers are expected to fulfill multiple roles. The expected roles and identities relating to the classroom responsibilities are learning mediator, interpreter and designer of learning programs, learning area/subject/discipline phase specialist and assessor. The additional social responsibilities of the teacher include leader, administrator, scholar, researchers and lifelong learner while simultaneously fulfilling a community, citizenship and pastoral role. To be efficient in these roles is a mammoth task, since the learning environment is often characterized by distorted views on human rights (Steyn 2008) that render learners beyond reproach and teachers powerless to intervene. Inevitably, the expectations of parents and society regarding teachers often become too much for many teachers to bear.

In summary, the considerable social pressure currently exerted on teachers leads to expectations and demands that border on the impossible. Nonetheless, the status and position of teachers in society is often regarded with skepticism, sometimes even disrespect. It is therefore not surprising that a growing number of matriculates do not even consider choosing teaching as a career, which Samuel (2008: 9) fittingly attributes to "the responsibilities being placed on teachers becoming increasingly unrealistic and unattainable."

The Professional Identity of the Teacher

Opinions about education and that people have about teachers and their professions have implications for the professional identity of the teacher. Opinions held by others influence teachers' perceptions of their work and how they do it, determine what is reported in the media and in research, play a role in the expectations that learners have of their teachers and are also indicative of how politicians and policymakers assess teachers. Teachers' perceptions of their work and how they do it are necessarily influenced by existing societal opinions about teaching: "In short, conceptions of what teaching is,

and of what it is for, make a difference in educational thought and practice” (Hansen 2001: 1). Currently, teachers are acutely aware of the low status they have in society. In this regard, Arends and Phurutse (2009: 31) refer to “teacher bashing” that they attribute to “negative public images of teaching”. Samuel (2008) shows convincingly how a teacher’s professional identity is formed on the basis of the community’s perception of teaching as a career.

Jansen (2001: 242) defines the professional identity of teachers as their professional, emotional and political self-image. The professional self-image refers to how teachers feel about their ability to teach and their subject knowledge as well as their training, manifested in their formal teaching qualifications. The emotional aspect refers to teachers’ emotional ability to, among other things, deal with the demands of learners, parents, the education department and large classes. The political aspect alludes to how teachers match their value system and personal convictions with changes in the education system, even though their personal convictions may be in conflict with new policies and systems.

Boles and Troen (2005: 17) reflect the fairly common view that teaching is merely a job, not a profession or a career. They attribute the education crisis to a “trilemma dysfunction” that effectively hamstring education and consists of the following:

- ♦ There are not enough teacher training students with the required abilities
- ♦ Teacher training programs are ineffective in preparing teacher training students for their careers
- ♦ The working life of teachers, specifically the working circumstances are generally unacceptable (Boles and Troen 2005: 8).

The latter point evidently has major implications for the career idealism and motivation of teachers -that have a significant impact on the retention ability of the teaching career, as will be shown below.

Retention Ability of the Teaching Career

Neither buildings, nor equipment or a huge education budget are crucial to the effective provision of education (Steyn 2008: 34), but rather the availability of sufficient and well-trained and motivated teachers. Arends and Phurutse (2009: 2) report that many countries, including South

Africa, are confronted with increasing problems in the provision of education. De Villiers and Degazon-Johnson (2007) argue that these problems may be caused by school-leavers’ perceptions of more attractive job opportunities, the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic on the teaching profession and the emigration of numerous teachers to “greener pastures”, often in the private sector. In 2008, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) found that approximately 30000 teachers left the profession annually while merely between 6000 and 7000 teacher training students completed their studies (Van Niekerk 2008: 10). Of 20000 former teachers, more than half indicated in an opinion poll that they left the teaching profession because of low job satisfaction as a result of workload, inadequate remuneration and a lack of professional status and respect (Hall et al. in Kruss 2008). Arends and Phurutse (2009: 46) mention the following reasons cited by beginner teachers for wanting to leave the profession: bad learner behavior and consequent disciplinary problems, lack of support from the parents, poor salaries and lack of incentives, work pressure, drastic changes in education and lack of support and caring from school management and the education department. These findings are even more alarming in view of the emergent reality that the training and retention of teachers have not kept up with the growth rate of the school-going population (Hall et al. cited in Kruss 2008: 112).

It is self-evident that more candidates urgently need to be recruited for teacher training to deal with the realities of a growing learner population and a decreasing teacher population. Yet, few high school leavers choose teaching as a career (Crosser 2009). Steyn (2008: 37) confirms this tendency and adds that it is difficult to persuade school-leavers to enter the teaching profession because of the difficulties that result from the ill-considered implementation of several variations of outcomes-based education, as well as the lack of support from provincial education departments, the reduction in the number of teachers in schools and especially the poor state of discipline in schools. Regarding the latter, Wolhuter and Oosthuizen (2003: 333) refer to research in which disrespectful behavior towards teachers was highlighted from a list that included drug abuse, pornography and assault as the most common and destructive forms of learner misbehavior. Based on the above theoretical

structure and the conceptual framework of negative forces, an empirical study of limited scope was undertaken, with the following focal question:

To what extent are teacher training students positively inclined towards a career in teaching? In view of our conceptual framework, this question implies attention to two key issues, namely, (a) the students' career motivation, and (b) the students' own moral values.

RESULTS

The research paradigm of this study can best be described as pragmatic-interpretive. Pragmatic because the researchers are of the opinion that an opinion poll of a large group of respondents can lead to valuable practical information on the basis of which a particular phenomenon or perception can be described. Interpretive because the researchers believe that an in depth probing of participants' views and experiences leads to qualitative information that is essential for understanding a particular attitude or phenomenon. This research paradigm requires a mixed mode research approach, namely a combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods.

The group surveyed by means of a questionnaire was the 2010 fourth year (final year) teacher training students of the University of Pretoria, taken as a convenience sample. These students were studying at one of the larger education faculties in South African universities. The researchers' assumption was that the feedback of these students would produce valid and reliable data.

After completion of the questionnaire and the initial processing of the questionnaire data, a focus group interview was held with five purposively selected questionnaire respondents, to verify certain aspects of the questionnaire data.

The empirical study was preceded by submission of the research proposal to the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education, which granted approval for the study. Informed consent was obtained from all research participants.

The questionnaire was administered during 2010 in classroom situations, and thus, a response rate of one hundred percent was obtained. The focus group interview was held in a committee room on the campus after the questionnaire data had been analyzed.

Data Analysis: Questionnaire

In the data analysis, the biographical information, exposure to news broadcasts, career orientation and values of the group surveyed are discussed.

Biographical Information

The gender composition of the respondents is shown in Table 1. The gender distribution (21.2% male and 78.8% female students) is indicative of the imbalanced gender distribution in the teaching profession. According to Clarke (2010), male teachers represent thirty-three percent of the South African teaching corps. That the teaching profession attracts far more women than men is a historical and worldwide trend. This may be explained by certain socio-economic reasons, such as the low teaching salaries compared to those in careers that attract men in particular, but also practical reasons, such as the high learner numbers in the foundational and junior primary education phases where women traditionally and understandably occupy the teaching posts.

Table 1: Gender

<i>Sex</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	88	21.2
Female	315	78.8
Total	403	100.0

Table 2 shows the age distribution of the respondents. It represents the typical age cohort of fourth year students, with the highest percentage (78.4%) in the age group 21 to 24 years.

Table 2: Age

<i>Age</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
20 years and younger	15	3.7
21 to 22 years	242	60.0
23 to 24 years	74	18.4
25 years and older	45	11.2
No response	27	6.7
Total	403	100.0

The population group composition of the respondents is shown in Table 3. It is apparent that the data collected represents the views of seventy percent white and thirty percent black

participants. The researchers saw no reason to use population group as a distinguishing factor in the data analysis. No real differences were expected and the researchers in principle wished to avoid the comparison of population groups as far as possible. The relevant data is provided merely to show that the views were not exclusively those of white students.

Table 3: Population group

<i>Population group</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Black	108	26.9
White	278	69.1
Coloured	10	2.5
Indian/Asian	4	1.0
Other	2	0.5
Total	402	100.0
No response	1	

Exposure to News Broadcasts

The rationale for including an item on the exposure of teacher training students to news broadcasts was the consideration that the degree of this exposure could have an effect on both key aspects important to the study, namely, the career orientation of the participants, as well as their moral values. News coverage is in general about the education crisis in South Africa and the moral values or lack thereof of prominent people in South Africa. The degree of exposure to news broadcasts is reflected in Table 4.

The information in Table 4 reveals that almost sixty percent of the respondents had regular exposure to both television and radio news broadcasts. Reading the newspaper was not as common. This latter finding corresponds to other findings on how often young people read a newspaper. Grade 11 learners, for example, are not keen newspaper readers (Steyn 2008; Kamper and Steyn 2009: 697). The fact that approximately two-thirds of the participants are in-

Table 4: Exposure to news

<i>Category</i>	<i>TV news</i>		<i>Radio news</i>		<i>Newspapers</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Every day	164	41.6	180	46.5	41	10.5
Twice a week	80	20.3	51	13.2	98	25.2
Every now and then	115	29.2	105	27.1	194	49.9
Seldom/never	35	8.9	51	13.2	56	14.4
TOTAL	394	100.0	387	100.0	389	100.0
No response	9		16		14	

formed about what is going on in the world is an indication that these students are well aware of the current state of education as well as the undesired ethical behavior of those in leadership positions.

Career Orientation

Four questionnaire items focused on the respondents' orientation towards the teaching profession. They were asked why they had chosen teaching as their career, how they evaluated the status of the teaching profession, how proud they were of their educational studies and the position they saw themselves occupying in ten years' time.

Table 5 lists a number of pragmatic and professional reasons for choosing teaching as a career. The data clearly shows that an awareness of a calling and a love for children were ranked far above pragmatic reasons (such as holidays, the possibility of an additional career and M-score). The M-score at the time of the study was the admission requirement of tertiary institutions that entailed a grading scale by which a point was allocated for the result obtained for each subject in Grade 12. The sum of these points determined a candidate's M-score.

Table 5: Reasons for choosing teaching career

<i>Reason</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
My M score was too low for another field	18	4.5
I am assured of a job with education	24	6.0
Work half day and have four holidays per year	4	1.0
I consider teaching to be a calling	199	49.5
My parents recommended it	18	4.5
I like working with children	85	21.1
Good opportunity to study further	39	9.7
I can have a second job/career together with teaching	15	3.7
Total	402	100.0
No response	1	

This table contains particular heartening information, as it indicates that fourth year teaching students study education for the right reasons, namely, love for children and because they regard teaching as their purpose in life.

The respondents were also asked to voice their opinion on the status of the profession they were preparing themselves for. At first glance, the information in Table 6 seems positive with more than sixty percent rating the status of the teaching profession as “high, very high”. However, it is enlightening that only thirty percent of the participants were of the opinion that the status was “very high” and thirty-eight percent that it was actually “low, very low,” which corresponds to data on the status of the teaching profession as set out in the conceptual framework of the research. Teaching is therefore not perceived as a prestigious profession by more than a third of the students, and this raises the question why this particular field of study was selected.

Notwithstanding the respondents’ indication in Table 6 of the status of the teaching profession, the information in Table 7 presents a strong and positive reflection of the respondents’ pride in their chosen field of study. The majority of participants therefore look forward to a career that they view as valuable and one that they take pride in. Only 7.4 percent of the respondents indicated that they were embarrassed to reveal their field of study.

Table 6: Evaluation of teaching career status

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very high	123	30.6
High	127	31.6
Low	118	29.4
Very low	34	8.5
Total	402	100.0
No response	1	

The respondents were asked to indicate their long-term commitment to a teaching career. As seen in Table 8, twenty-five percent of the respondents indicated that they were not committed to stay on in the teaching profession, and the deduction can be made that it is the same cohort of participants who are fairly proud as well as those who are fairly embarrassed (See Table 7) about studying education, thereby indicating their neutral stance towards the profes-

Table 7: Degree of pride in field of study of teaching

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Very proud	225	56.1
Fairly proud	146	36.4
Fairly embarrassed	21	5.2
Very embarrassed	9	2.2
Total	401	100.0
No response	2	

sion. It therefore seems that a quarter of the respondents has a hidden agenda for their choice of studies, but these students are obviously not very impressed with their field of study, nor do they plan to pursue a teaching career. Most respondents (60%) hoped to be appointed in a middle-level management post in their subject.

Table 8: Expected position in ten years’ time

<i>Position</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
A senior teacher	115	28.7
Head of department	126	31.4
Principal	60	15.0
Not in teaching	100	25.0
Total	401	100.0
No response	2	

Values

A number of items elicited information in order to compile a cryptic profile of the personal and professional values of today’s teaching students. Based on her own practical experience of teaching, the researchers considered the following as essential in the value profile of a teacher: religion, view of multiculturalism, language usage, dress code, views on discipline and being a role model. In view of possible implications for the training curriculum, respondents were also asked how the teacher training had enriched their personal and professional values and principles.

Table 9: Religious group

<i>Religion</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Christian	385	95.5
Jewish	0	0
Buddhist	0	0
Muslim	4	1.0
Hindu	1	0.3
None	9	2.2
Other	4	1.0
Total	403	100.0

The information in Table 9 reveals that almost all the respondents belonged to a religious group. Only two percent did not.

Compared to the information in Table 9, the information on active involvement in religious activities (See Table 10) is less positive. A total of fifty-eight percent of the respondents indicated regular involvement in religious activities, but the rest indicated more sporadic involvement. As more than seventy percent of South African citizens adhere to some or other form of religion (Kruger et al. 2013), and there is a strong correlation between religion and moral behavior (Blakeney and Blakeney 2006) it is one of the expectations of parents that teachers would reflect a religious value system when dealing with their children (Lovat and Nielsen 2009).

Table 10: Involvement in religious activities, such as attending church services

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
More than once a week	79	19.9
Once a week	152	38.2
About twice a month	90	22.6
Once every six months	35	8.8
Never	39	9.8
Other	3	0.8
Total	398	100.0
No response	5	

With regard to socio-educational values, the respondents were predominantly against cultural exclusivity in the classroom. In this respect it is clear that aspirant teachers realize that the reality of the South African classroom is diverse, and that they need to deal with it. Approximately seventy-five percent of these participants acknowledge the rights of learners to receive education, irrespective of their language, culture and so on, thereby indicating that they em-

Table 11: Views on the multicultural classroom

<i>Views</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Each child, irrespective of race/language/culture, has the right to be treated the same in the classroom	299	74.4
It would be difficult for me to work with children from another culture like I do with those from my own culture	16	4.0
Total	402	100.0
No response	1	

brace inclusive education. Only four percent of the respondents were in favor of this exclusivity (See Table 11).

Strong mother tongue loyalty in teaching was not found among the majority of the respondents (See Table 12). Almost sixty percent of the respondents considered deviating from mother tongue education as acceptable. In fact, a quarter of the respondents were unequivocally in favor of English as the language of instruction. This is revealing in view of the fact that sixty percent of the total number of respondents were Afrikan speaking and one would expect African speaking students to prefer English as language of instruction and learning. In this regard, Peyper (2014) points to the fact that African students believe that proficiency in English improve the chances of academic success.

Table 12: Language use in education

<i>Views on language usage</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
It is important to use your mother tongue as purely as possible	172	42.9
It is acceptable to deviate from the language of instruction and learning in the classroom by also using terminology from other languages.	125	31.2
I think one should use as much English as possible.	104	25.9
Total	401	100.0
No response	2	

The information in Table 13 shows that most respondents (72%) were aware of the value and role of the teacher's appearance in the classroom, which gives an indication that student teachers are aware of the relationship between a profession and outward appearances. Only fifteen percent said that dress code was a matter of personal preference.

A significant view of class discipline (with 60% of the respondents in favour of firm con-

Table 13: Dress code in the classroom

<i>Views on dress code</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Professional (neat and formal)	289	71.9
Modern (what the learners like)	43	10.7
Comfortable (for example, a tracksuit)	7	1.7
Sexy	2	0.5
It is a personal choice	61	15.2
Total	402	100.0
No response	1	

duct and action) is evident in Table 14. Some seventeen percent of the respondents were even in favor of reinstating corporal punishment. Almost a quarter of the respondents felt that a more relaxed approach to discipline was needed. What is enlightening is that a majority of students believe in discipline and see the need for rules, regulations and punitive measures. Discipline is a major problem in South African schools, and these future teachers are well aware that a disciplined classroom is the foundation of an environment where instruction and learning can take place.

Table 14: Class discipline

<i>Views on class discipline</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
I want to act firmly and in control. The times when children only listened quietly to the teacher are gone.	240	59.7
For me, the most important thing is that learners learn effectively. Classroom conduct is not as important to me.	63	15.7
I think corporal punishment should be brought back. It would give teachers a deterrent to discipline learners.	32	8.0
Total	402	100.0
No response	1	

To summarize the matter of values, and how the teacher models them in the classroom and the community, respondents were asked to consider the statements contained in Table 15. The data speaks for itself. With a few exceptions, the respondents were thoroughly aware of their responsibility to be role models wherever they were and to set a good example at all times.

Table 15: Exemplary conduct

<i>Views on conduct</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Teachers must always be a good example wherever they are	385	95.5
A teacher's conduct outside the school is not as important	14	3.5
A teacher's conduct is not at all important	3	0.7
Total	403	100.0

Finally the respondents were asked to answer a more personal question: To what extent has your teacher training enriched your person-

al values and principles? Table 16 shows the results. A total of fifty-eight percent of the respondents reported a significant enrichment of values while thirty-five percent indicated a smaller degree of enrichment. The nature of enrichment was discussed in more detail during the qualitative focus group interview.

Table 16: Personal enrichment

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Percent</i>
To a large extent	234	58.2
Partly	140	34.8
Not at all	28	7.0
Total	402	100.0
No response	1	

Data Verification: Focus Group Interview

To verify the questionnaire data, a focus group interview was held with five questionnaire respondents (two male and three female students). These participants were purposively selected on the basis of the extensive knowledge of the researchers regarding the final year teacher training students. The interviewees were selected according to their ability to give their own considered and responsible opinion, which would also represent those of their fellow students on the themes that emerged from the questionnaire. Corresponding to the main themes in the questionnaire, the focus group interview sequentially covered the reasons for choosing the field of study of teaching, the status of the teaching profession, where the participants saw themselves in ten years' time, teachers as role models and the effect of teacher training on the participants' values.

Why Teaching?

Two students initially planned to pursue other fields of study, but circumstances forced them to change to teaching. All five students were happy with their choice and wanted to "make a difference", in other words, they realized that they had a calling.

Status of Teaching Profession

The participants all agreed that the status of the teaching profession was rather low—"on a scale of 1 to 5 it is at most 3". Initially family

members and friends disapproved of their chosen field of study, but their stance gradually changed to understanding and even admiration. A family member of one of the participants remarked that she was so grateful that "(her) grandchildren will be in good hands" with teachers of the caliber of that particular participant. Family members and friends provided tangible support and encouragement.

In Ten Years' Time

Four of the five participants expected to be still in the teaching profession in ten years' time, mostly as heads of department. All of them wanted to increase their skills through further study. None of the participants aspired to be school principals and, according to one female participant, "...that is in any case a man's job". One participant merely answered that he would "...go wherever he was sent..." while following a teaching career during the next ten years. Only one participant mentioned that he would most likely enter the business world in five years' time. He already had certain business interests.

Teachers as Role Models

The participants agreed that teachers as role models should not be underestimated. Learners take note of the language usage and every action of the teacher: "You don't know how learners watch you." In many cases the teacher has to be a substitute for the love and attention that a mother or father is supposed to give the child. Teaching is therefore not just a rational or didactic activity, the teacher must "teach with feeling". Discipline will never be a problem if the learners can see and recognize the teacher's knowledge and skills: "...the learners know you know something..." The participants moreover emphasized Afrikaans speaking lecturers as role models for students, as well as the influence of the faculty ethos, both these influence students' actions during their teaching practice. The participants compared themselves to students from a distance education university and noted that the absence of lecturers as role models was very obvious. The students from the distance education institution were uncertain about values and methodology, they did not follow a particular code of conduct and a greater degree of dependence was noticeable.

Development of Values during Teacher Training

The participants were unanimous that teacher training first and foremost broadened their outlook on life and "opened their eyes". The training increased their understanding of the diversity of cultures and convictions in the country, and the value of tolerance. One participant highlighted her own shift in outlook from traditional-conservative to liberal, also regarding her religious convictions. Another participant pointed out that he had been among children of all ethnic groups from his first school year and that their generation was no longer concerned about differences - "...we don't see them as different anymore..." Nevertheless, participants noted and experienced cultural differences, but said that these could be dealt with by understanding differences in teaching and cultural views. A solid Christian attitude towards life and a vision of life was noticeable in all the participants.

The participants largely confirmed the findings of the questionnaire. A positive attitude towards the forthcoming teaching tasks was evident, together with a strong realization of the associated responsibilities as role models. They were convinced that their group of graduates "...would be good teachers..."

DISCUSSION

The research question that guided this paper was: To what extent are teacher training students positively inclined towards a career in teaching? Regarding the two key issues that this question implies, namely, (a) the student's career motivation and (b) the student's own moral values, the empirical data revealed the following:

Career Motivation

Based on the degree of teacher training students' exposure to news broadcasts (See Table 4), it can be assumed that they are not isolated from what is happening in South Africa, neither with regard to problems in education. They are fully aware of the poor status of the teaching profession (See Table 6). The students surveyed were nevertheless all proud of their field of study (See Table 7), they were totally aware of their calling (See Table 5) and most of them had long-

term prospects for a career in education (See Table 8).

These findings are surprising in view of the severity of the education crisis in South Africa, the exhausting workload of South African teachers and the associated high stress levels that Steyn (2008: 37) ascribes to a constantly changing curriculum, a lack of support from provincial education departments, the reduction in the number of teachers in schools and especially the state of discipline in schools. Regarding the latter, Wolluter and Oosthuizen (2003: 333) refer to research that singles out disrespectful behavior towards teachers from a list that includes drug abuse, pornography and assault as the most common and destructive forms of learner misbehavior. The final year teacher training students had undoubtedly already been significantly exposed to these career challenges during their practical teaching. Yet, their career motivation was without doubt positive, which may be attributed to a powerful intrinsic career calling. It is clear that students' teacher training stimulated this calling for the better. However, the question remains whether this calling will be sustainable, hence the intention of the researchers to do a follow up study with the participants once they have been in the teaching profession for at least a year.

Moral Values

It is apparent that the teacher training students were, almost without exception, strongly religious (See Table 9) typified by a fairly regular involvement in religious activities, such as attending church services (See Table 10). Regarding social values the students were predominantly culturally inclusive (See Table 11), reinforcing the realization that this current generation has a collective mindset, thus viewing their fellow citizens (learners) as a comprehensive group, and not based on ethnic or cultural divisions (Lefko-Everett 2012). With respect to professional values, most of them regarded their own neat dress code in the classroom as important (See Table 13) as well as the necessity for firm action and control in the classroom (See Table 14), which concurs with recent research that mentions teachers' most pressing need being to be an authority again, thereby implicating their wish to be respected (Millei et al. 2010). The picture is less favorable regarding the lan-

guage loyalty of the teacher training students. The minority held the view that it is important to use the mother tongue as authentically as possible in teaching (See Table 12). In summary, the teacher training students were almost unanimous in the need for teachers to set a good example wherever they find themselves (See Table 15) and act as role models in society. Similar to their career motivation, the students were very positive about the contribution their teacher training had made to the enrichment of their personal principles and values (See Table 16).

These findings lay to rest any doubt about the intentions and abilities of today's teacher training students to act as moral role models, both in and outside the classroom. An encouraging view of moral values among teacher training students became apparent from the questionnaire and was confirmed by the qualitative data verification. In the envisaged follow up research, the challenges confronting the research participants as beginner teachers in maintaining their moral values will be studied.

CONCLUSION

With reference to the theoretical framework, namely the ecosystemic societal model of Bronfenbrenner as discussed earlier, it is clear that the teaching profession faces prominent negative forces. These negative forces were highlighted in the conceptual framework in which the researchers focused on the unrealistic expectations of parents and society regarding teachers, the undermining of the professional identity of the teacher and the lack of teacher retention in the teaching profession. The intensity of these forces can easily lead to the assumption that many teacher training students are considerably skeptical about their choice of studies and career, and are consequently morally not really suited for the teaching profession.

The opposite was found in the empirical study. With reference to the ecosystemic model used as the point of departure for this paper, the research findings reveal that "non-systemic" forces, such as the realization of a calling, are ultimately stronger than the systemic forces. An established truth was once again confirmed: The teaching profession cannot be considered purely from a systemic point of view; the career orientation of the teacher is primarily value-driven. The research confirms that the realization of a

calling is the most important asset and determinant in teacher training and provision. In line with the Bronfenbrenner model, it can again be confirmed that, as part of the microsystem, teachers are the most active role players in the provision of education and not merely passive recipients and processors of the forces of the systemic approach.

The positive nature of the findings underlines the absolute necessity for education management measures to ensure the sustainability of beginner teachers' positive career orientation. An online advisory and motivational service for beginner teachers should undoubtedly prove its value as a first and viable project.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations regarding this paper can be made:

Theoretical Framework

It is recommended that this study be conducted by using a different theoretical framework, such as Bourdieu's field theory, as the social positioning of people is a determining factor in any study. Taken the diversity of South Africans into account, such a study should yield meaningful results.

Participants

This paper focuses on the experiences of final-year teaching students who have already completed three years of study. It would be interesting to get the views of first-year teaching students to determine whether there is a difference in first and final-year students' perceptions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although this study was conducted at one of the largest residential universities in South Africa, a similar investigation with other universities is also deemed necessary to determine whether variables such as demography and student composition would render different results. In the Eastern Cape, for instance, education is subjected to serious problems and there is a high degree of strikes, absenteeism and violence in schools.

REFERENCES

- Arends F, Phurutse M 2009. *Beginner Teachers in South Africa: School Readiness, Knowledge and Skills*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Boles KC, Troen V 2005. Mamas, don't let your babies grow up to be teachers: School reforms are destined to fail until teaching becomes a professional career. In: C Chauncey (Ed.): *Recruiting, Retaining, and Supporting Highly Qualified Teachers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. 1-36.
- Bronfenbrenner U 1990. Discovering What Families Do. In UrieBronfenbrenner: *Rebuilding the Nest: A New Commitment to the American Family*. Family Service America. From <<http://www.montana.edu/www4h/process.html>> (Retrieved on 8 October 2013).
- Chauncey C 2005. *Recruiting, Retaining, and Supporting Highly Qualified Teachers*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Clarke A 2010. What Happened to Teacher Training? Mail and Guardian. From <<http://www.mg.co.za/printformat/single/2010-10-05>> (Retrieved on 14 August 2013).
- Crosser M 2009. *Studying Ambitions: Pathways from Grade 12 and the Factors That Shape Them*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- De Villiers R, Degazon-Johnson R 2007. Editorial: The political dichotomy of teacher migration. *Perspectives in Education*, 25(2): vii-xii.
- De Wit JT 1981. *Professional Orientation for the Teaching Profession*. Durban: Butterworths.
- Hansen DT 2001. *Exploring the Moral Heart of Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Jansen JD 2001. Image-ning teachers: Policy images and teacher identity in South African classrooms. *South African Journal for Education*, 21(4): 242-246.
- Kamper GD, Steyn MG 2009. Toekomsverwagtinge onder die jeug van die bruin bevolkingsgroep in Suid-Afrika. *Tydskrifvir Geesteswetenskappe*, 49(4): 688-704.
- Kruger JS, Llubbe, GJA, Steyn HC 2013. *The Human Search for Meaning: A Multi-religious Introduction to the Religions of Humankind*. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Kruss G 2008. *Teacher Education and Institutional Change in South Africa*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Landsberg E, Krüger D, Nel N (Eds.) 2005. *Addressing Barriers to Learning: A South African Perspective*. 1st Edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers.
- Lefko-Everett K 2012. *Ticking Time Bomb or Demographic Dividend? Youth and Reconciliation in South Africa*. Pretoria: Open Society Foundation for South Africa.
- Lovat Tand Nielsen T 2009. *Values Education, Quality Teaching and Service Learning: A Troika for Effective Teaching and Teacher Education*. Australia: David Barlow.
- Millei Z, Griffiths TG, Parkes RJ 2010. *Re-theorizing Discipline in Education: Problems, Politics and Possibilities*. New York: Peter Lang.
- Mohlala T 2010. School Districts Under Scrutiny at Education Week. Mail and Guardian From <<http://www.mg.co.za/printformat/single/2010-10-01>> (Retrieved on 17 September 2013).

- Osguthorpe RD 2008. On the reasons we want teachers of good disposition and moral character. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(4): 288-314.
- Peyper TJ 2014. *A Study of Perceived Classroom Language Proficiency of Pre-service Teachers*. MEd Study. Pretoria: University of Pretoria.
- Pretorius F 2008. Keeping abreast of changing times and demands in education: Implications for teacher education in South Africa. *South African Review of Education (SARE)*, 14: 166-182.
- Rademeyer A 2008. Maak onderways 'n prioriteit. *Beeld*, 5.
- Republic of South Africa 2000. *Norms and Standards for Educators*. Pretoria: Department of Education.
- Roehlkepartian EC, King PC, Wagener L, Benson PL (Eds.) 2006. Delinquency: A quest for moral and spiritual integrity. In: *The Handbook of Spiritual Development*. London: SAGE, P. 374.
- Samuel M 2008. Accountability to whom? For what? Teacher identity and the force field model of teacher development. *Perspectives in Education*, 26(2): 3-16.
- Slater RO 2008. American teachers: What do they believe? *Education Next*, 8(1): 46-54.
- Spaull N 2013. *South Africa's Education Crisis: The Quality of Education in South Africa: 1994-2011*. Centre for Development and Enterprise. Pretoria: South Africa.
- Steyn HJ 2008. Bring onderwyskolleges terug: Kan dit? *Woord en Daad*, 34-40.
- Swart E, Pettipher R 2005. A framework for understanding inclusion. In: E Landsberg, D Krüger, N Nel (Eds.): *Addressing Barriers to Learning: A South African Perspective*. 1st Edition. Pretoria: Van Schaik Publishers, pp. 3-26.
- UNICEF 2014. Overview: Education and Adolescent Development. From <http://www.unicef.org/southafrica/education_344.html> (Retrieved on 26 March 2015).
- Van Niekerk C 2008. Min leerlinge oorweeg deesdae werk as onnie; geleentheid veral in Wiskunde en Wetenskap. *Beeld*, 30 Desember.
- Wolhuter CC, Oosthuizen IJ 2003. 'n Leerdersgesprek-tief op dissipline: 'n kwalitatiewe ontleding. *Koers*, 68(4): 437-456.