

Secondary School Students' Attitudes towards Teaching Profession: A Case Study of Tanzania

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study examined students' attitudes towards the teaching profession. The study had a sample of 80 students and 20 teachers who were selected purposely from two government secondary schools. Data were collected through interviews and focus group discussions. Findings revealed that secondary school students had both positive and negative attitudes towards teaching profession. Girls had more positive attitudes toward the profession than boys. Other professions such as law, computer science, hotel management, human resource management, and nursing were ranked higher than teaching profession. Teaching was perceived by the students as a low paid job. However, teachers were not good models to the students because they were complaining and not performing their duties accordingly. This can be accounted for by shortage of resources, large classes, poor teaching and learning environments, and low salaries. Additionally, teachers had negative attitudes toward the teaching profession because it was not their choice but a means of securing jobs. On the basis of the findings, it was recommended, among other things, that the Government should improve teachers' salaries, teaching and learning environment, and allocate adequate teaching resources at the schools. This would motivate teachers to teach effectively and inspire the students to like the profession.

Key words: Career, Qualifications, Practice, Motivation, Personality, Experience and Confidence.

INTRODUCTION

Education is conceived as a powerful agency which is instrumental in bringing about the desired changes in the social and cultural life of a nation (Egwu, 2015), and the quality of a nation depends upon the quality of its citizens (Parvez and Shakir, 2013) on one hand, the quality of education is directly related to the quality of teaching and learning (Mkumbo, 2012) on the other hand. The quality of the citizens depends upon the quality of education system and the quality of education depends upon the combined efforts of planners, educationists, and administration (Parvez and Shakir, 2013). However, the most significant factor is the quality of the teachers. It is in the schools, colleges, and universities that the development of the attitudes and dispositions necessary for the progressive life in a society takes place (Parvez and Shakir, 2013). Teaching is a very respectable profession despite this fact not even then not all the teachers who are in this

profession like it. Many prospective teachers join this profession not by choice but by chance or due to other reasons. They are disinterested towards the teaching profession. They just take the course as second choice, if they fail to obtain admission to first choices such science or any other courses according to their liking and they are generally dissatisfied throughout the training period (Mkumbo, 2012; Parvez and Shakir, 2013). Parents seeing that the teaching profession is not afforded any respect accompanied by a poor salary, do not advice their children to go into it despite the fact that they are the nation builders. Teachers are not properly paid; salary is meager compared to other professions. This demoralizes would-be teachers resulting in a display of negative attitudes towards the profession (Okemakinde, 2013). Looking on what has been observed by (Mkumbo, 2012; Parvez and Shakir, 2013; Okemakinde, 2013), it seems that majority

of the teachers join teaching profession not because they like it but because they lack qualifications to join other professions of their liking and choice.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

There have been some attempts to explain students' negative attitudes towards the teaching profession. For example, a report by Smith a leader of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) (in BBC News 1999) indicated that secondary school learners believe that teaching offers too much stress and too little pay. Unlike other professions such as medicine, law, and engineering the teaching profession lacks status and glamour and these the researchers are implicated as the major deterrents for students not to choose the teaching as a profession (Austin, 2008; Gough, 1990; Kyriacou and Coulthard, 2000; Sumsion, 2000). For instance, the study done by (Mutshaeni et al., 2015) on high school students' attitudes towards the teaching profession revealed that poor working conditions, lack of resources, the salary package (low wages) that did not correlate with the workload contributed to their attitudes towards the teaching profession. In addition to that, Egwu (2015) on her study entitled attitude of students towards teaching profession in Nigeria: Implications for Education Development showed that students had negative attitude towards the teaching profession because teaching was a difficult task, and teachers were not well paid compared to other professions. In Tanzania, the choice of profession starts when students are at secondary education. At this level, students are given opportunities to choose professions they are interested of.

Since attitudes play a significant role in determining one's interest of which he/she would like to be in a society, and the fact that students do not have similar attitudes, this study therefore, investigated secondary school students' attitudes towards the teaching profession in Tanzania, and how it contributes to professionalism in the field of education.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study was to investigate secondary school students' attitudes towards the teaching profession.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What are the students' attitudes towards the teaching profession?
2. What other professions are liked most by the students when at school?
3. What roles do secondary school teachers play in motivating students to join/like the teaching profession?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social theory argues that there are factors such as innate genetics, special abilities, and environmental conditions that influence an individual's attitudes towards career (Mutshaeni et al., 2015). Also Gottfredson's (1981) developmental theory of occupational submits that individuals progressively eliminate what they perceive as unacceptable alternatives to create social space or a zone of unacceptable alternatives. The theory argues that individuals hold images of occupations often referred to as occupational stereotypes (Gottfredson, 2003).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teaching Profession

In the 1950s and 1960s, teaching was an esteemed profession even though some of the practitioners were not highly educated, and received little or no pay (Eze, 2004). The respect afforded to doctors, lawyers, and other prestigious professions was also given to teachers. Teachers were happier then and the dream of most parents at that time was for their children to become teachers because they were highly regarded in the society (Eze, 2004). Profession, according to Enyi (2014) has to do with an occupation that has exclusive body of knowledge which are relevant to the society, and whose members possess special skills and competencies acquired from training. The question is not only whether teaching is a profession but also does it enjoy the prestige of professionalism as is seen in medicine, law, engineering accountancy and other professional fields (Nwite, 2012)? Ascribing a perfect professionalism to teaching will help boost the morale of the serving teachers as well as of prospective teachers in that there would not be a bias to whether teaching is a profession or not. Lawyers, engineers, medical practitioners were made by teachers. In spite of the good work of teachers in the society, there is still a wide spread misconception towards teaching profession. The public looks down on teachers and his profession (Egwu, 2015).

Baggini (2005) claims that for today's teachers professionalism is interpreted in terms of what extent the teachers' overcome the difficulties and what extent they are able to use their skills and experiences related to their profession. On the most basic level, 'professional teacher refers to a person who is paid to teach'. On a higher level, it can refer to teachers who represent the best in the profession and set the highest standards (Tichenor and Tichenor, 2005). For example, Wise (1989) describes professional teachers as those: [who] have a firm grasp of the subjects they teach and are true to the intellectual demands of their disciplines. They are able to analyze the needs of the students for whom they are responsible. They know the standards of practice of their profession. They

know that they are accountable for meeting the needs of their students.

Attitude

An attitude is an important concept in understanding human behaviour. As behaviour is composed of many attributes, then one of these important attributes is attitude. One's behaviour to a great extent depends upon one's attitude towards the things, idea, person, and object in his/her environment (Mangal, 2009). In this way attitudes are to a great extent responsible for a particular behaviour of a person. Attitude is also defined as preference along a dimension of favorableness and unfavorableness to a particular group, institution, concept, or object. A person with a favorable attitude toward something is likely rating it favorably, and an unfavorable attitude presumes a tendency to reject something (Sax, 1974). For instance, an individual's attitude towards his/her occupation may affect the end-product. Someone who does not enjoy his/her occupation will not be able to succeed in that occupation. A good teacher with proper attitude, behavior, and personality traits can motivate and inspire students. However, a teacher with a positive attitude towards teaching is considered better and becomes popular figure among students. Positive attitudes not only promote learning but also create the climate which stimulates effective learning. Therefore, teachers must develop proper and positive attitudes towards their profession so that they can bring about a positive change in the life of their students (Parves and Shakir, 2013).

Furthermore, Lawal (2012) revealed that there is a significant difference in the way parents, teachers, and students perceive the teaching profession. Parents perceive the teaching profession negatively while teachers and students perceive the teaching profession positively. For example, Temizkan (2008) argued that the teachers' attitudes towards their profession are usually related with their enjoying the profession, dedicating themselves to their profession, being aware that their profession is socially necessary and important, and believing that they need to improve their profession, and so, themselves, continuously. For example, Osunde and Izevbogie (2006) investigated 400 secondary school teachers' attitudes toward the teaching profession. Findings revealed that because of financial remuneration and delay in payment of salaries, teachers have negative attitude towards the teaching profession. They found that poor conditions of service; wider negative influence and teacher's negative personal and professional behavior are the factors of the teacher's negative attitudes towards the teaching profession. In another development, Kaya and Büyükkasap (2005) investigated the attitudes and concerns of 36 senior pre-service teachers. Results showed that females were found to have more positive attitudes toward the profession than males, viewed it as an ideal profession and they had more ambition to be

teachers. Studies show that when teachers are motivated and love the teaching profession, students are motivated to learn and they learn the content taught by their teachers more effectively (Caprara et al., 2006; Mkumbo, 2012).

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This is the arrangement of conditions for collection and data analysis. Research is needed because it facilitates the smooth sailing of the various research operations Kothari (2004). Case study design was used because it focuses on one particular study area or issue such as one region or one school, even if this has been criticized as descriptive and takes more of a qualitative than quantitative approach. For instance, Kothari (2004) asserts that the case study design allows participants to speak for themselves, thereby enabling the situation to be seen through the eyes of participants. In addition to that, the design was used to collect data for the current study as it can be used to describe attitudes, beliefs, opinions and other types of information. It was through this design that enabled the researcher to obtain and interpret meaning and feelings of informants in their natural settings.

Approach

The study applied qualitative approach because it implied an emphasis on the qualities of entities, process, and meaning that cannot be experimentally examined (Kothari, 2004). For instance, Merriam (1988) found qualitative approach suitable dealing with critical problems of practice and extending knowledge base on various aspects of education.

Sample and Sampling Techniques

It is usually not possible to deal with the whole target group, and so one must identify a portion of the population called the sample (Kothari, 2004). In this study, four secondary school students were purposely selected because they were near to sit for the final National Form Four Examinations. At this stage they are given an opportunity to select the career they think they liked so that when the results are out and passed, they would have an opportunity to continue with higher levels of education including teaching profession. This was a point where the researcher was able to examine students' attitudes before they leave schools. The sample in this study included students and teachers who were selected purposely in order to meet the specific needs of the study. For instance, focus group discussions conducted gathered qualitative data from the participants about attitudes, teaching and learning, work load, and responsibilities that teachers face

on daily basis at schools. There were 80 students; 40 boys and 40 girls, and 20 teachers who were teaching different subjects at the selected schools. Gender was considered to both students and teachers.

DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

Cohen et al. (2000) assert that for qualitative data analysis the researchers have at their disposal a range of techniques, for example, coding of field notes content, and analysis of field notes, case studies, narrative accounts, cognitive mapping, and seeking patterning of responses. They add that the criteria for deciding which forms of data analysis to undertake are governed both by fitness for purpose and legitimacy. Following these expositions, the researcher utilized content analysis of field notes since the study was qualitative in nature. For instance, data collected through focus group discussions were subjected to content analysis in order to obtain latent meanings of the opinions described. This analysis technique was used because it would produce qualitative materials, which give deep meaning and a full understanding of certain opinions. Data from the interview were analysed following Holliday's (2002) strategy that data from all parts of the corpus were arranged under thematic headings.

RESULTS

The study investigated secondary school students' attitudes towards the teaching profession. Findings are presented according to research questions as follows:

What Are The Students' Attitudes Towards The Teaching Profession?

Results from the study showed that secondary school students had both negative and positive attitudes toward teaching profession. However, girls had more positive attitudes toward the profession than boys. For instance, when asked whether they liked the teaching profession, 52 girls said 'yes' while 28 boys said 'no'. In the interview, various reasons contributed to negative attitudes towards the teaching profession were mentioned as follows: first, teachers' low salaries were the major factor that contributed to students' negative attitudes towards the profession. For example, 49 boys and 31 girls said that teachers' salaries were low when compared to other professions like law and medicine. To them teaching was not given a first priority. Secondly, students revealed that teachers were not respected in the society as it was in past years. One of the reasons said by some of the students was, "Teachers are not rich. They are always complaining and do not even dress smartly". This means that if they join the profession they will not become rich but poor as their teachers. Thirdly, boys and girls liked studying science

subjects than arts subjects because they did not want to be teachers. When asked why? The reason was, "We want to be scientists. Arts subjects will take us to teaching which we do not like". Fourthly, 22 students; 12 boys and 8 girls said that their parents forced them to study science subjects just because they do not like their children to be teachers. Lastly, students perceive teaching as the profession joined by those who did not perform well in the National Form Four Exams. One of them said, "You see, I have never seen division one and two students posted to teaching profession. They are always posted to form five or other payable professions. But look, those few with division three and many in division four are the one's posted to teaching profession". That meant that students selected to join the teaching profession are one's who did not perform well in the final exams.

Furthermore, girls and boys whose attitudes were positive towards the teaching profession gave different opinions as follows: "I like teaching because it is easy to be employed". "My parents are teachers, so I want to be like them". "If I do not qualify to join high school, then I will join teaching because it is easy to join". "I am not good in science subjects; therefore, the possibility of me to be a teacher is high. I am waiting for it". "It is a profession in which anybody can join. So do I". "Those who do not get good grades are posted to teaching". "I know I will get teaching even if I get division four". "I want to be a teacher like my science teacher. I like him very much".

What other professions are liked most by the students when at school?

The study investigated whether students had other professions they liked rather than teaching profession. Different names of professions like law, nursing, technician, librarian, hotel management, computer science etc. were given in ranks from high to low. Findings from the students showed that 25 students out of 80 liked law, 08 nursing, 16 computer sciences, 07 technicians, 04 librarians, and 20 hotel management. Law and hotel management professions were liked by many students compared to other professions, and the main reason being it was easy for them to be employed after completing the courses. Additionally, they said that, salaries in these professions are high compared to those of teachers at the schools. Students were categorized in respect to years when examining their attitudes. There were three categories according to ages; 16 to 17, 17 to 18, and 18 to 19. Results from the study showed that students in the first and third category (24) did not like the teaching profession while (10) liked the profession. In the second category, (34) students did not like the profession while (12) liked. That meant that 58 students out of 80 in the study did not like the teaching profession at all while 22 students liked it. In Tanzania, most of the secondary school students' in category two completes secondary education at this age. This means that majority of them will not give priority

to teaching profession when selecting careers before they complete secondary education.

What roles do secondary school teachers play in motivating students to join/like the teaching profession?

The study also examined the role played by teachers in motivating students to like the teaching profession. In the group discussions teachers were asked if they liked the teaching profession themselves. 9 teachers said that they liked the profession and 11 not. Here is what was said by the teachers who liked the teaching profession: I like teaching because it gives me time to do my works at home after school hours. Since I do not spend the whole day at school as it is in other professions, then I have time to do extra activities in order to earn extra income as well as taking care of my family. (Teacher, School A). Teaching enables me to build good relationships with my fellow teachers and students. Also students liked me very much here. They are like my children. So I feel proud to be their teacher. I am not regretting to be a teacher. (Teacher, School A). I like teaching but school environment does not attract me to teach. I wish I could be in a private school because they have good buildings, high salaries, and attractive environment. If I get chance to move to private schools, I will do so immediately. (Teacher, School B). Teaching is where I show my capacity to teach. Students said that I am competent in teaching mathematics. This motivates me to work harder. Therefore, when I teach students and they passed exams, I feel happy and proud of myself. (Teacher, School A). One of my friends told me to quit teaching because it is not a payable job but I told her that I like teaching and I will never quit because it is my choice. I love teaching from my heart. (Teacher, School B). I like teaching because through it I will upgrade myself compared to other professions. I have seen teachers who upgraded themselves from certificate level to first degrees, masters, and PhDs. I think I will have an opportunity to do the same which is a credit to me. (Teacher, School B). I like teaching because my husband told me that teaching profession is of integrity compared to other professions, and teachers are very much respected in the society than people like secretaries who are always liked by their bosses. His words give me hope, courage, and add love to me. (Teacher, School A). My mother is a teacher, so she inspires me a lot to be a teacher like her, and here I am. I like teaching but my children do not like what I am doing, and they said that they will never be teachers like me. Mhhhhh! (Teacher, School B). I like teaching because the knowledge gained from psychology helped me a lot in understanding my students, in solving their problems, as well as taking care of my children at home. I think I am different if I compare myself with house wives at my home area. (Teacher, School A). Teachers' ideas from the group discussions who did not like the profession were also considered in the study. However, there was 1 teacher out

of 7 who narrated a very interesting story about teaching profession as follows: I did not want to be a teacher from my heart. When Form Four Results were out I was posted to Butimba Teachers' Training College while it was not my choice. I did not go because I hate teaching. I thought my brothers would help me to find a better profession than teaching. Because of that, I stayed home for a year helping my mother house chores. As time went on I find myself tired working and staying at home. My friend, Mary who accepted to join Korogwe Teachers' Training College came home on holidays. She inspired me a lot. She looked different. She told me many things about college and teaching. It was from here where I found myself foolish staying at home rather than going to the college while I did not have any alternative. One month later, there was an announcement in Kiswahili newspaper, Uhuru advertising posts for the students who did not get postings to apply for teaching at various Colleges in Tanzania. Without wasting time, I applied. Results were out after two months, and I was posted to Kigurunyembe Teachers' Training College, in Singida region for two years course. I completed the course and awarded a Certificate. Later, I joined Diploma course for two years. Now I am capable of teaching History and English subjects at secondary schools. I am no longer regretting to be a teacher. I like teaching than any other profession in the world (Smile). (Teacher, School B). Some of the teachers who had negative attitudes toward the profession reveal the following:

Teaching was not my first choice. My first choice was to be a doctor. Teaching was my third choice but when the results were out I was posted to Teachers' Training College. I had no alternative but to go. Here I am but not happy with this profession. If I could have something else, I would move from this field. (Teacher, School A). My final results were not good for me to join high school. So I joined teaching profession because I had no alternative. (Teacher, School B). Large class sizes discouraged me to like the teaching profession. For example, I have 100 students in my class. I am teaching English. You know very well that English is a difficult subject to teach. Today, I have three periods how can I mark all exercises? Also when I think of what I am paid, I feel bad because it is very little compare to what I do five days in a week. Therefore, I teach for the sake of teaching and not from my heart because there is no motivation here. If there were few students my morale to teach would be different but I have nothing to do. I am just teaching so that I can survive. (Teacher, School B). I decided to join this profession because the qualifications that I had were not sufficient for me to join other professions, and if I did not join, I would be left behind or left out of the system. (Teacher, School A). I am not happy in this profession because some of my friends have been teasing me by saying, "You!!! Look here; there is millions of professions in this world. Why did you choose teaching? Are the other professions finished? Mhhhhh, me, teaching no, no I will rather stay without job than been a teacher. You will end up poor my friend".

(Teacher, School B).

In reality, I do much work compare to what I am paid. My salary is very low. I have to pay transport, house rent, food and many other things from my salary. The remaining balance is not enough to buy basic needs for my two children. (Teacher, School A). Furthermore, students were asked if teachers were role models to them at the schools. Results showed that there were few students who liked the profession because their teachers were good examples at the schools. Here is what 2 of the students illustrated: "I like Madam Agnes (not real name) because she teaches us Mathematics very well until all of us understand. I want to be like her. "My teacher, Zuleikha (not real name) teaches literature very well. Before, I did not like the subject because it was difficult for me to understand. Since she came to our class there are changes because she teaches us through stories. I like her way of teaching very much. I wish I could be like her in the near future". Despite the fact that teachers had personalities and confidence, low salaries and poor teaching and learning environment made students to have negative attitude towards the teaching profession. Since majority of the students particularly boys did not show interest in teaching profession, the study investigated the extent to which teachers had motivated the students to like the profession. This is what 2 of the teachers said: I always tell my students that teaching is a career that doors are open for teachers to upgrade themselves. Look at me, I was a grade C teacher but I managed to upgrade myself from Certificate to diploma level. This cannot be found in other professions like nursing and librarians. (Teachers, School B). When teaching, I use encouraging language to my students. When they performed well I congratulate them. By so doing they like me, and some of them say that they want to be teachers like me. (Teacher, School A).

DISCUSSION OF THE RESULTS

The study examined secondary school students' attitudes towards the teaching profession. Results from the study showed that both boys and girls had positive and negative attitudes towards the profession. The results from this study are unique when compared to recent findings of Egwu (2015) who revealed that attitudes of the students' towards the teaching profession was negative but he did not specify whether it was for the boys or girls. For instance, negative attitudes found in this study corroborate with those of (Sax, 1974; Kaya and Büyükkasap, 2005; Osunde and Izevbigie, 2006) who found that females had positive attitudes toward the teaching profession than males. This might be one of the reasons of having many female teachers at the schools than men. The fact that some of the parents had negative attitudes towards teaching; they discouraged their children to join the profession. Findings are similar to those of Lawal (2012) that parents perceive the teaching profession negatively

while teachers and students perceive the teaching profession positively. However, there were students who wanted to be teachers just because their parents were teachers. They saw their parents as models to them. With such attitudes, this group of students when selected in the teaching profession they will diligently join it different from those who will join by chance. Despite the fact that students had both positive and negative attitudes, there was no significant difference between girls' and boys' age in the study.

The study also found teachers with both negative and positive attitudes at the schools but there were factors that contributed to negative attitude towards the profession such as large sizes, low salaries, and poor teaching and learning environment. This means that if teachers are not enjoying their profession then they will not be able to succeed in teaching. These results are in line with those of Osunde and Izevbigie (2006); Mutshaeni et al., (2015) that poor conditions of service; wider negative influence and teacher's negative personal and professional behavior are the factors of the teacher's negative attitudes towards the teaching profession. Since teachers are the most important factor in teaching and learning process, and if they have positive attitudes in teaching, then the trend can motivate and inspire students at the schools to value and like the profession. That meant that teachers have roles to play in nurturing students' minds and enabling them to realize their potential. Results from the study showed clearly that some of the teachers joined the teaching profession because they failed to obtain the level of qualifications required to join other professions, such as law, hotel management, librarian, nursing, computer science etc. That meant that they joined teaching in order to be employed since it was easier compared to other professions. Findings relate to those of (Parvez and Shakir, 2013) that teachers join this profession not by choice but by chance or due to other reasons. From the observation, there is a need to improve teaching and learning environment, provide adequate teaching facilities as well as motivating teachers in such a way that they themselves will be attracted to teaching, and at the same time being models to their students whom some of them will change negative attitudes they have to positive. By so doing majority of the students in secondary schools will be attracted and like the profession.

Teaching is a very respectable profession in the world but not liked by all who are practicing it. For instance, the question of low salary is a critical factor in attracting teachers to join and remain in the teaching profession. In the study, low salaries contributed to teachers' low attitudes at the schools. Findings were similar to those of Osunde and Izevbigie (2006) who found that remuneration and delay of in payment of salaries had negative attitude towards teaching profession. For instance, teachers' salaries in Tanzania are still disappointingly low and it has

been noted by the students at the schools whom we are expecting to join this profession. This matter need to be addressed accordingly in order to improve not only teachers' motivation but also improve the quality of education and raise students' motivation to like the profession as it was in 1950s to 1960s. The fact that this is possible, then parents, teachers, and students' perceptions in teaching profession will change to positive and not negative as it is now.

CONCLUSIONS

Findings from the study revealed that girls and boys had both negative and positive attitudes toward the teaching profession despite the fact that girls liked the profession than boys. There were factors that have contributed to students' negative attitude towards teaching professions among them are teachers' low salaries, many tasks, and that the profession is not as respected as other professions. In order to be successful, one needs to love and like the profession and perform it willingly. Also if teachers are treated fairly, there is high possibility for them to develop positive attitudes toward the profession that will also motivate their students to like teaching when at schools. Therefore, the government should consider teachers' attractive teaching and learning environment and raise their salaries that would not only motivate them to teach but also raise students' attitudes at the schools. Once students find that teaching is a well-paid profession they will join it willingly rather than it is at the moment where they are posted at the colleges by chance and not by choice. If this is given consideration, it will play a part in changing students' negative attitudes to positive, and in the end they will choose teaching as a career when selecting courses at higher levels.

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