

Why Do They Want to Work in Schools? A Qualitative Study of Teacher Education Students' Career Intentions

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine the intentions of final-year teacher education students to seek employment in schools after graduation and to identify the factors shaping their professional decisions. The study involved 451 fourth- and fifth-year teacher education students. Data were collected using an anonymous online questionnaire consisting of a categorical question regarding intention to work in a school and a set of open-ended follow-up questions tailored to each response. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The findings indicate that the majority of students intend to work in schools, with key motivating factors including working with children, teaching and knowledge transmission, a sense of calling and professional identity, and the opportunity to make a positive contribution to society. In contrast, students who do not intend to work in schools most frequently cite low financial compensation, the unfavourable social status of teachers, stress and parental pressure, as well as structural problems within the education system. Students who are undecided express marked ambivalence, simultaneously recognising the intrinsic value of the teaching profession and the systemic barriers associated with employment in schools. The results highlight the need for systematic improvements in teachers' working conditions and the social status of the teaching profession, particularly in the context of the growing teacher shortage.

Keywords: Employment Motivators and Demotivators; Intention to Work in Schools; Teacher Education Students; Teacher Shortage; Teaching Profession