



Preservice teachers' understanding of their professional goals: Case studies from three different typologies



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H I G H L I G H T S

- Three case studies from three typologies of teachers were examined about teaching goals.
- Different combination of reasons (i.e., intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic) are relevant for each case.
- Beliefs about teaching are based on previous experiences.

A R T I C L E I N F O

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This study presents three prospective teachers from different typologies describing their teaching goals. Findings illustrate how participants understand in unique ways their goals in relationship with influential factors that helped them crystallize their teaching decisions. Each individual describes goals as related to main teaching motives, identity issues, beliefs, emotions, and commitment. Implications for practice include teacher education programs and policymakers better understanding the personal characteristics of teacher candidates and tailoring their programs to meet the individual needs of future teachers.

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1. Introduction

The educational research literature at the start of the twenty-first century has seen numerous international studies describing the need for quality teaching in K–12 classrooms given growing concerns about teacher attrition (e.g., Berger & D'Ascoti, 2012; Rinke, 2008; Watt & Richardson, 2011). Research shows that teachers can become dissatisfied with the job, because of stress, classroom management issues, and salary (Stotko, Ingram, & Beaty-O'Ferrall, 2007), and attrition has been shown to be the primary cause of demand for new teachers (Guarino, Santibanez, & Daley, 2006; Watt & Richardson, 2012). Because of this phenomenon, the quality of teaching suffers, and with a limited number of qualified teachers to replace those who leave the profession, students are struggling to receive quality education (Harris & Sass, 2011).

Recent research findings from international studies including teachers in the United States (Cave & Mulloy, 2010; Clotfelter, Ladd, & Vigdor, 2007, 2010; Thomson, 2011; Thomson, Turner, & Niefeld, 2012; Thomson & McIntyre, 2013), Belgium (Rots, Aelterman, Devos, & Vlerick, 2010; Rots, Kelchtermans, & Aelterman, 2012), Germany (Kieschke & Schaarschmidt, 2008; König & Rothland, 2012), Switzerland (Berger & D'Ascoti, 2012), Australia (Watt & Richardson, 2008, 2012) and Turkey (Kilinc, Watt, & Richardson, 2012) highlight the complexity of teacher motivation and pinpoint the challenges of being a teacher. These findings underscore the importance of understanding teachers' professional goals and initial motives for entering the teaching profession and the importance of choosing future members of the profession, and suggest a need for systemic teacher education reform in many countries around the globe. The United States and the United Kingdom have been taken concrete steps to address issues of teacher attrition and teacher quality by developing lateral entry programs to increase the supply of teachers. In the United States, programs like Teach for America (TFA) and VIF International Education are aimed at recruiting teachers from

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diverse backgrounds to fill teaching positions in schools that frequently have high teacher attrition rates. In the United Kingdom, TFA's partner organization Teach First is aimed at injecting high-quality teachers into the profession through alternate routes to certification. Research examining outcomes of these programs on student achievement has found that the overall higher qualifications of teachers from TFA and similar programs may compensate for the greater preparation of traditionally certified teachers (Boyd, Goldhaber, Lankford, & Wyckoff, 2007). Moreover, these alternative-route programs produce a fraction of the total teachers entering the workforce, and teachers in such programs tend to leave the profession at high rates following their teaching commitment (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt, & Wyckoff, 2011).

The issues described above emphasize the importance of analyzing preservice teachers' (PTs) career choice before trying to understand motivational aspects behind teacher attrition. Understanding the goals of PTs prior to or early in their teacher preparation programs can help educators provide quality experiences to prospective teachers who would develop into successful and committed teachers (Cave & Mulloy, 2010). Recent international research on teacher values and motives from the United States (Pop & Turner, 2009), Croatia (Jugovic, Marusic, Ivanec, & Vidovic, 2012), Switzerland (Berger & D'Ascoti, 2012), the Netherlands (Fokkens-Bruinsma & Canrinus, 2012) and Australia (Richardson & Watt, 2005; Watt & Richardson, 2007, 2008) shows that PTs' initial teaching motives and views about teaching are crucial to their future professional identities, classroom decisions, and commitment to teaching.

Nevertheless, most research investigating the teaching goals of PTs focuses on their motivation for entering and remaining in the teaching profession. Only a few studies conducted in the United States and Australia (i.e., Thomson et al., 2012; Thomson & McIntyre, 2013; Watt & Richardson, 2008, 2011) have investigated PTs' motivational profiles (i.e., typologies) as related to identity issues, teaching beliefs, emotions, and commitment. In the current study we explore how PTs from different typologies understand and describe their professional (teaching) goals as related to various influential factors. Three case studies were purposefully selected to illustrate individual teaching goals of PTs from different teaching typologies identified empirically in Thomson et al. (2012). Our hope is that these case studies will provide educational policymakers and teacher educators a better understanding of the typologies of PTs. We see this as a necessary first step toward teacher education programs in a variety of contexts being better tailored to PTs' motivations and beliefs and ultimately to being better able to prepare PTs for the realities of the teaching profession (Guarino et al., 2006; Rots et al., 2012; Watt et al., 2012).

2. Theoretical considerations

2.1. Theoretical model

In the current study, *teaching goals* are defined as subjective representations of an individual's future actions (Schunk, Pintrich, & Meece, 2008; Thomson & McIntyre, 2013). Teaching goals are life-task goals and are related to a host of decisions faced by PTs including career decisions, professional choices, and other life-related decisions such as personal or family-related decisions. Teaching goals can be contrasted with academic or achievement/learning goals which focus on an individual's learning process (Latham, Seijts, & Crim, 2008; O'Neill & Thomson, 2013; Schunk & Pajares, 2009; Schunk et al., 2008; Wigfield & Cambria, 2010).

A review of research (i.e., Guarino et al., 2006; Schutz, Crowder, & White, 2001; Watt et al., 2012) has identified factors influential to the development of the teaching goal, including social influences, such as family, friends, and former teachers, and intrinsic

influences, such as self-perceived teaching identities and the nature of teaching motivators (i.e., social utility, intrinsic, and personal utility). Other studies link teachers' notions of professional goals with the context of goal development and their actions and strategies, such as schooling experiences, emotions, commitment to the profession, and planned professional actions (Pop & Turner, 2009; Smethem, 2007; Thomson & McIntyre, 2013).

In describing our theoretical foundations we draw from the literature exploring teachers' professional goals, motivation, identity, and beliefs. The teaching goal model (Fig. 1, from Thomson & McIntyre, 2013) presents PTs' goal development in relationship with influential factors that help individuals crystalize their teaching decisions, including: (1) motivators (e.g., intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic motivations); (2) beliefs (e.g., beliefs about the teaching career; beliefs about instruction); (3) context (e.g., PTs' past schooling experiences; emotions); and (4) strategies (e.g., commitment to teaching; future professional plans). In the current study we borrow elements from this theoretical model to guide our data analyses. Next, we describe the literature related to main concepts from the study: teaching goals, identity, motivations, beliefs, teacher emotions, and teaching commitment.

2.2. Teaching goals

Most research literature describes PTs' professional goals in the context of teaching motivations and teaching beliefs (Richardson & Watt, 2005; Rots et al., 2010; Thomson & McIntyre, 2013). Professional goals are life-task goals involving professional as well as personal decisions that impact the individual's aim to become a teacher. These life-task goals can help explain effort and persistence that individuals use to become successful professionally or personally. Professional goals are situated at the center of an individual's life, and the success or failure in achieving such goals is dependent on other internal or external factors (Wigfield, Tonks, & Eccles, 2004; Wolters & Daugherty, 2007).

Recent research in teacher education has stressed the importance of investigating how PTs understand their professional goals and how the goal to become a teacher develops when pursuing teaching as a career. For instance, Pop and Turner (2009) found common sources influencing PTs from the United States in their decision to become teachers. These sources were related mainly to social influences such as family, friends, and former teachers; major life events; and personal utility reasons such as job benefits, vacations, and whether they had children.

A number of international studies have also examined the relationship between teaching goals and individuals' perceived levels of teaching commitment (Rots et al., 2010, 2012; Smethem, 2007; Thomson & McIntyre, 2013). Smethem (2007) found that different professional attitudes of teachers from the United Kingdom were correlated with different levels of commitment to teaching. In the context of a teacher education program in Belgium, Rots et al. (2010) found that PTs who enrolled in the program with stronger intentions to want to work as a teacher and those who reported being more committed to teaching at the end of the program were more likely to show higher intention to enter the teaching profession.

2.3. Teaching identity

Researchers have argued that the underlying purpose of teacher education programs is to form PTs' professional identity. Van Huizen, Van Oers, and Wubbels (2005) explain that this requires PTs to "explore the practice of teaching for meanings to which they are willing to commit themselves, and for the realization of which they are willing to develop competence" (p. 282). How teaching identity is conceptualized has important implications for teacher

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