

Beginning Teacher Education Students' Attitude towards their Future Profession: The Case of Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences

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Abstract: The present study was conducted on 138 freshman degree students in the Faculty of Teacher Education, Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences (DCTEHS). The aim was to find out whether or not trainee teachers were initially committed to teaching (or actually preferred teaching to other professions) and their attitudes towards the teaching profession. The data were collected using an attitude scale developed by the investigators and a survey questionnaire. The major statistical techniques employed were the non-parametric analogue of Friedman's 2-way ANOVA by ranks and the logistic regression analysis. The results revealed that 74.6% of the respondents do not have initial commitment to teaching. The outstanding reasons for these were, perceived low social status accorded to teachers, absence of economic incentives, low chance for career advancement, and low base salary. Further, high achievers in ESLCE seem to show low inclination to the teaching profession, and the likelihood of initial commitment to teaching was found to be relatively higher among those with comparatively low ESLCE GPA. Implications of the findings to redress the problem of teacher education in Ethiopia were also discussed in this paper.

Introduction

Teachers as a social and economy group and teaching as a profession are reported to be accorded low socio-economic status in Ethiopia. Low socio-economic status fosters low and (probably) negative attitude towards the profession. Such an attitude would marginalize preference of the profession over other professions, and would repel those who are taking up teaching. Since teachers, among

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others, are the executors of (formal) education, and teaching is the key to produce the future elites who shall advance the country, the teaching profession and teachers should not continue with this sad history - teaching profession at risk and the future development of the country at stake. The actual status of the job and job-takers, preference and attitude of prospective teachers cry out in search of professional research.

Empirical data seem to be lacking to discern the exact time when teaching as a profession started losing attraction. One can, however, argue that the profession is as less popular as it was in the late 1990s. Thus, since an unknown time, situations seem to have been changed, i.e., the high respect that teachers used to enjoy has become eroded. Recent studies (e.g., Tesfaye 2003) also confirm that teachers believe they are accorded low respect. The following conditions further substantiate the assertion (1) Common observation and research findings (e.g., Tekeste, 1996; Menna and Tesfaye, 1998; 2000; Tesfaye 2003) indicate that majority of present day teachers do not prefer to stay in the profession (i.e., Many of those teachers who have the minimum chance are leaving the profession and still others are intending to leave); (2) Daily observations tell that society pays little attention and attaches low status to teachers and teaching profession; and (3) College or would-be college students do not seem to join with interest colleges/faculties and/or fields that lead to teaching profession. Even some students assigned to teacher education colleges/ faculties withdraw, others are in a dilemma whether to continue or not with their education, still others are very much worried whether the degree they aspire will be named as Bachelor of Education, Arts, or Sciences. In fact, students in the college under study made a strike in opposition to the nomenclature "Bachelor of Education (B. Ed.)¹". The strike went serious that students of Alemaya University, Natherth Technical Teachers' College and Bahir Dar Teachers' College of similar faculties joined in and left their respective campuses (Teklehaimanot, 2000). Is it really the name of the degree or the profession that is at the back of the strike? Or do the students lack initial commitment to teaching career

to begin with? In the light of these observations and experiences this research is initiated since the issue has been crying and still cries out in search of professional research.

Added to these, the interest for a close scrutiny of the problem basically arose from the actual observations of the investigators as instructors of professional courses, during student consultations, observation of high attrition due to non-academic and medical reasons and huge number of transfer requests to other higher education institutions with lesser chance to teaching career. Moreover, the increasing concern among professionals about the danger of deteriorating interest in teaching profession about similar higher education institution was the impetus to this venture. For instance, a few years back in his key note speech on the National Workshop for the Improvement of Primary and Secondary Education in Ethiopia, the then President of the Addis Ababa University expressed concern that upon completion of the first year course a significant majority of the student population refuses to join the teacher education streams (Mogessie 1998).

It can be boldly argued that attitude towards and preference to the teaching profession has declined over the last forty years in Ethiopia. The attitude held about the profession and preference to the career and the causes that accompany the diminishing interest are, therefore, worthy of investigating.

Although research is meager in this regard, limited data and resources available are lighted upon below to further strengthen the above argument. Research in the area dates back to the early 60's. Of interest to this study and accessible to the researchers were Aklilu (1967), Anberbr (1971), Tekeste (1990 and 1996), Dejene (1996), Seyoum (1996), Temesgen (1996), Tamire (1997), Getachew (1999) and Menna and Tesfaye (2000). Since Aklilu's (1967) was a pioneer and informative study, we shall review his work at length. Aklilu questioned why elementary school teachers leave the teaching profession. Naming it a "brain drain" and /or "teacher wastage", he

reported that the brain drain from the primary schools to other jobs dates back to the early 60's. He also reported that those leaving the profession were the active and responsible teachers who suggest [and work for] the improvement of their schools. Adding that 55 out of his 254 respondents (i.e., a little higher than a quarter) were attracted to teaching as a career, he reported that many of them were leaving the teaching profession.

Of the contributing factors, according to the researcher, the following ranked first to third: Economic and financial factors, administrative factors from within and without the school, and unfavorable working conditions in the school. Low social prestige accorded to teachers by government officials, parents, and the community preceded the last among of the miscellaneous factors. Anberbr (1971) shared these factors in order.

Discussing those economic factors, Aklilu explained that the highest reason for teacher withdrawal was money. Cited under this were low starting salary, absence of regular salary increments, lack of salary scale to indicate the maximum the teacher may aspire, meagerness and infrequency of increments awarded not on the basis of merit; lack of any provision for salary adjustment when teachers obtain higher qualifications; preferential treatment given in the matter of salaries to teachers from favored and disfavored or disadvantaged areas, lacking hope for (future) advancement; absence of fringe benefits; and salary not reaching them in time.

Discussing the unfavorable working conditions, Aklilu listed unavailability of teaching aids, blackboards, teacher's desk, and overcrowded classrooms. Difficult living conditions like physical hardships in underdeveloped areas, language difficulties, absence of transfer policy, poor selection of teachers and leaders were reported, too.

The second factor from the last (health, family, need for respect, and other factors), was that teachers left the profession due to low social prestige accorded to them. This included low social prestige given to

teachers by parents, government officials, and the community. Because teachers had no place in the public, parents liked their daughters to marry men who enjoy the respect of the community rather than teachers who had low-class occupation.

In general, the crucial factors for teacher wastage in Ethiopia according to Aklilu can be summarized as economic, administrative, professional, and social. Aklilu's suggestion is worth quoting here:

If the welfare of our young people is the welfare of the future of Ethiopia, then everyone concerned, Ministry officials and members of the government, must take a long hard look at the situation and make a bold attempt to remedy the defects as soon as possible, it is dangerous to trifle with the future of a country. (p. 39).

Since the time Aklilu reported the above research finding and commented on the seriousness of the problem for future advancement, some changes and policy adjustments have been effected. Better initial salary and due adjustments, education and training policy and so forth can be cited.

After these policies were produced and adjustments were effected, Menna and Tesfaye (1998) found out that teachers are still leaving the teaching profession. Their data collected on 213 primary and secondary school teachers in *Gedeo Zone* (Southern Nations, Nationalities, and People's Regional State) suggested that the strong determinant factors, among others, were perceived social status, career commitment, and initial preference and interest in the job. Social status according to Aklilu (1967) was found to be one of the least contributing factors as opposed to findings by Menna and Tesfaye (1998). According to them, only 22.1 percent (nearly similar to Aklilu's 1967), of the respondents joined the profession with interest while 75 percent of them took it either by assignment or because they had no other job opportunity. Since career commitment is one of the strongest predictors for teacher's decisions to stay in the job, these researchers found out that those teachers who joined the profession with interest were less likely to leave the job.

Two-third of the respondents reported that teachers compared to other personnel working in other governmental and non-governmental organizations have low social status. In line with this, teachers' perception of their own social status was found to correlate with the decision to stay in or leave the job.

Career choice is influenced by the perception of the job market and salaries (Temesgen 1996). Contrary to what was expected by Menna and Tesfaye (1998), however, the new salary scale effected by the TGE in 1994 was not found to be a significant factor for teachers' decision to stay in the job. Likewise, environmental factors such as work environment, effectiveness of school administration were not found to be significant.

Effect of Academic Achievement and Gender differences

There also seem to exist partial evidence that depicts a relationship between academic achievement and choice of teaching as career. A study conducted in a western context claims that academically achieving students are less likely to choose the teaching career. Previous researches indicated specifically that (1) the academically talented high school graduates tended not to choose teaching as a career (Vance and Schlechty 1982; in Gold 1996) (2) Of the high school graduates who do enter teacher training; the academically more able ones are more likely to change to another career (Schlechty and Vance, 1981). On the other hand, a study conducted on a total of 31 teacher education students in Ethiopia uncovered that those who joined the science education stream were comparatively less achievers in the Ethiopian School Leaving Examination (ESLCE) compared with those who joined other fields (Dejene 1996).

Similar to academic achievement, there is evidence to suggest a strong relationship between preference to teaching career and gender. The finding is that females prefer teaching career more than do their male counterparts (e.g., Menna and Tesfaye 1998). Some scholars construe that due to the impact of sex typing in assigning

sex roles, teaching is considered as the extension of women's role as mothers and care givers in the family. The findings that underscore preference to teaching by women are mainly attributed to the assignment and choice of career in consistent with traditional gender-role attitude held by our society. Nonetheless, the finding of gender-role attitude was found to vary among female college students in Ethiopia depending on their maternal status attributes i.e. traditional attitude was associated with less education of the mother, while egalitarian attitude was found to relate to more maternal education (Tesfaye 1997). This has also been confirmed in the study conducted among teachers in *Gedeo* Zone (Menna and Tesfaye 2000). However, there is no enough evidence suggesting the existence of gender difference regarding preference to teaching at secondary school level in the Ethiopian context.

In short, evidence regarding the relationship between preference to teaching career and academic achievement and gender seem not to have been adequately addressed in the Ethiopian context. The present study may provide some indications regarding this.

Initial Commitment as Antecedent of Career Commitment

It is adequately documented that initial preference (or initial commitment) to teaching career is a precondition for future commitment to the teaching profession and job satisfaction (Furrugia 1986; Gold 1986; Fresko *et al.* 1997; Kyriacou *et al.* 1999). However, before trying to establish the link between teacher career commitment and initial commitment to teaching, it is essential to define the concept of "*commitment*" as a psychological construct in organizational context. According to Buchanan (1974), commitment is viewed as "a particular affective attachment to the goals and values of the organization, to one's role in relation to goals and values of the organization, and to the organization for its own sake, apart from its instrumental worth" (p. 533). On the other hand, career commitment is conceptualized as a motivational process in which an individual's work behavior in a discipline is expressed through internalized

normative pressures such as personal moral standards and value systems (Weiner 1982; in Tesfaye 2003). Weiner went so far as indicating that once such pressures develop they are likely to have a long-term influence upon one's work behavior regardless of rewards and punishments that may be associated with them.

Career commitment may be higher among teachers who were initially attracted to the profession (Farrugia 1986). Farrugia's (1986) study compared a representative sample of experienced teachers who initially preferred teaching and those who did not. He then demonstrated the factors that influence their choice of teaching career and differentiated those factors which bolster or undermine occupational commitment. According to the findings, for 63 per cent of the cases, the major reason why they choose teaching (initially committed) as a career was intrinsic attraction (e.g. desire to work with young people, love of passing knowledge, stimulating and satisfying vocation). The remaining 37 per cent of the respondents, however, joined teaching due to extrinsic factors (e.g. job security, job availability, salary). Further, among those respondents who joined teaching due to extrinsic factors, 25 per cent of them reported to be satisfied with their job, while 75 per cent of the respondents who were intrinsically attracted reported to have experienced job satisfaction. In short, the findings disclosed that the majority of the respondents who joined the profession due to intrinsic features of the teaching career demonstrated a high level of professional commitment vis-à-vis those who have chosen to be teachers due to extrinsic aspects of the career. Almost identical findings were reported among beginning teachers in England and Norway recently (Kyriacou *et al.* 1999) indicating that those teacher-candidates who have chosen to join teaching career are intrinsically motivated and expressed satisfaction with the kind of work they do. Goodlad (1984), having found similar results among British subjects, concluded that teachers who have gone into teaching because of inherent professional values were more satisfied and more committed as compared to those whose entry into the occupation was for economic reasons.

Thus, since career commitment and job satisfactions are characterized as measures of employees' attitudes towards their jobs (e.g. Cohen 1999), teachers' level of commitment to their profession or career and satisfaction with it demonstrate their attitude towards their teaching career. Thus, initially committed beginning or experienced teachers as reported in Kyriacou *et al.* (1999) and Farrugia (1986) have positive attitude towards teaching as a career than those who did not initially prefer to join it.

Assumptions and Guiding Questions

In the light of the theoretical and empirical evidences reviewed, the following hypotheses could be formulated: (1) initial preference (i.e. initial commitment as it is used here) and attitude towards teaching profession is likely to be low due to factors related to base salary of teachers, low societal perception, lesser chance for future career advancement, and the fact that beginning teachers are likely to be assigned to remote areas of Ethiopia unlike others in non-teaching careers. (2) Beginning teacher education students with higher ESLCE score have unfavorable attitude towards teaching and lower likelihood of initial commitment to the profession as compared with their counterparts having comparatively low ESLCE GPAs. (3) Female beginning teacher education students tend to have favorable attitude towards teaching compared with their male counterparts.

On the basis of the above mentioned hypotheses, the following research questions guide the study:

- What is the attitude of Teacher-Education freshman students towards teaching profession?
- What are the most important perceived reasons that encourage or discourage young college entrants to assume teaching as a career?
- Do socio-demographic factors relate to initial commitment to teaching career?
- Does beginning teachers' previous academic achievement relate with their attitude and initial preference to teaching career?

- Which variables (socio-demographic, academic achievement or attitude towards teaching profession) significantly predict beginning teacher education students' initial commitment?
- Which fields of study do freshman students aspire to join? And why?

Definition of Key Concepts

The following key terms are used to designate the major study variables. They are operationally defined as follows for the purpose of the present study:

- **Attitude towards teaching profession:** refers to the degree to which beginning teacher education students evaluate teaching with a given degree of favor or disfavor. It is assessed based on a five-point Likert-type attitude scale as illustrated in the methods section.
- **Initial commitment-** refers to whether or not student teachers' *initially preferred* to join teacher education. Thus, it is assessed as a dummy variable (coded as 1; if initially chosen and coded as 0; if not initially chosen).
- **Academic Achievement:** refers to both previous achievement (ESLCE GPA) and current achievement (First semester college GPA- DCTEHS-GPA).
- **Beginning Teachers:** First year teacher education students assigned in two streams namely: social science and natural science streams at Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences (DCTEHS).

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were 150 beginning teacher education students randomly selected from a total of 400 enrolled in the Natural and Social Science streams the Faculty of Teacher Education, Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences in 1998/99 academic year. Considering the two broad streams as strata, in each

case, 75 participants were selected out of 200 students using a simple random sampling procedure. Thus, the sample had originally included about 37.5% of the target population. However, data on 12 respondents were eliminated from the analysis due to incomplete information. As a result, responses of the remaining 138 participants were considered for the final data analysis. All in all, this sample constituted well over a third (34.5%) of the students who joined the Faculty in the same academic year. The classification of the sample in terms of gender reveals 83.9% males and 16.8% females. The mean age for both sexes was 19.3 years. Of the total sample, 48.6% were from the Social Science and 51.4% from Natural Science streams, respectively.

The reason why the study focused only on beginning teacher education students was that freshman students have not yet been exposed to professional courses that were assumed to affect the respondents with regard to the teaching profession. On top of this, it was also presumed that the study on freshmen might give an indication of how much of the students have really preferred teaching as a career since initial commitment to teaching was found to increase the likelihood of staying in the job (Menna and Tesfaye 1998; Gold 1996).

Measuring Instruments

Data were obtained through the instruments prepared to collect the required information. The major study variables were beginning teachers' academic achievement, socio-demographic characteristics, and initial commitment and attitude towards the teaching profession. The following instruments were employed.

The Attitude Measure

A Likert-type 5 point scale attitude measure was developed by the investigators based on opinions about the various attitudes and stereotypes about the teaching profession. Data were collected from

20 students of the Faculty of Teacher Education. Review of existing literature on the subject from studies conducted in the Ethiopian context (Aklilu, 1967; Ambereber, 1971; Menna and Tesfaye, 2000; Tekeste, 1990; Dejene, 1996) was also made. Initially, the Attitude to Teaching Profession (ATP) scale constituted a total of 12 items. Two items were discarded because of their low total-item correlation. The 10-item attitude scale included five positively worded statements like: "I prefer teaching career even if I am given the chance to join a non-teaching field of study", and five negatively worded statements like: "I don't think I would stay for a long time being a teacher". The scoring for negatively worded statements was reversed (i.e. 1 = strongly agree and 5 = strongly disagree). The internal consistency reliability index for the final scale was found to be very high [Cronbach alpha (r_{α}) = 0.88] Thus, high scores on the ATP scale indicate favorable attitude towards teaching and low score indicate less favorable attitude.

Initial Commitment

As it is clearly indicated in the operational definition, initial commitment refers to whether or not beginning teachers have chosen the teacher education stream. Thus, this variable was assessed based on a single item. Accordingly, student-teachers were asked to respond to: "Did you choose to join teaching career despite other options upon completion of your high school? The response to this item was provided on a two-point (yes or no) type format. The single item was not intended to assess beginning teachers' commitment to the profession as a psychological construct but rather as precursor of future likelihood of turnover and satisfaction in the job (see Farrugia 1999; Kyriacou *et al.* 1999) even though complex psychological constructs such as job satisfaction are measured with single-item and proved to be good for their external validity, practicability and efficiency than multiple items in recent psychological literature (e.g., Nagay 2002; Wanous *et al.* 1997).

Questionnaire

A three-page questionnaire was prepared to collect information on the relevant socio-demographic factors of the respondents, parental status attributes, outstanding reasons that discourage them not to choose teaching, and those reasons that encourage them to choose non-teaching fields. In addition, information was collected on which career they have been aspiring before joining college, and about significant people who influenced the respondent in choosing that career.

Academic Achievement

Data about the respondents' academic background were also collected from the registrar office of the college. These included their Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate (ESLCE) Grade Point Average (GPA) and their first semester college GPA using the identification numbers provided by the respondents.

Procedure

The attitude scale together with the questionnaire was administered at the end of the second semester of the freshmen program. The students who volunteered to participate in the study were asked to come to a lecture hall to fill in the forms. After distributing the forms, the investigators clarified about the objective of the study and gave assurance about the anonymity of the responses that would be made. The time spent on filling the forms was 65 minutes.

Data Analysis

Relevant statistical procedures were employed to analyze the data. These included descriptive, parametric and non-parametric statistics. Zero order correlation and Chi-square statistics were used to find out the existence of association between the dependent and the independent variables. A t-test was also used to find gender differences in ESLCE and college GPAs and the ATP scores. For data that were at ordinal level, a non-parametric analogue of ANOVA- the

Friedman two-way analysis of variance by ranks was employed (Siegel and Castellan 1988). It helped to test the statistical significance of the rank ordering of the reasons that discourage choosing teaching career and those that encourage the choice of other careers. Following that the non-parametric multiple comparison procedures and the Page's test for ordered alternatives were employed to confirm that the order of average ranks of the respective reasons are in their correct order (Siegel and Castellan, 1988). In addition, a logistic regression option of the likelihood-ratio statistic was employed to find out the significant predictors of freshman students' initial commitment to take up a teaching career. The justification behind the use of this procedure was that likelihood-ratio statistic option enable to identify the most variables by eliminating the less important predictors of (*SPSS Advanced Statistics User's Guide*, 1990: 57) initial commitment. All statistical tests were made against $\alpha = 0.05$, and the probability levels were reported.

Findings

The present study showed that of the total sample, only 35 (25.4%) were interested to continue their training as teachers compared with the overwhelming majority 74.6% (n = 103) who were not interested in a teaching career and yet forced to pursue their training.

The findings are presented in the following order. First, students' preference to teaching is described along with background demographic variables to be followed by the effect of gender and academic achievement (ESLCE-GPA and college-GPA) on their preference. Secondly, the results of the Friedman 2-way ANOVA and multiple comparison procedure that discourage choice of teaching career; and preference to non-teaching career are presented. Finally, the results of a logistic regression that investigated the important predictors of initial commitment to teaching are discussed.

Table 1: Students Initial Commitment to Teaching by Socio-Demographic Variables

Variables	Initial Commitment to Teaching			Chi-square ^c
	Yes	No	Total	
Field of Study				
Social Science	22 (14.2)	45 (52.8)	67	10.69*
Natural Science	7 (4.8)	63 (55.2)	70	
Total	29	108	137	
Gender				
Male	23 (25.2)	93 (90.8)	116	1.56
Female	7 (4.8)	15 (17.2)	22	
Total	30	108	138	
Mother's Education				
Read and Write	5 (3.7)	12(13.3)	17	1.52
Primary	13 (12.2)	43 (43.9)	56	
Secondary	4 (4.3)	16 (15.7)	20	
College	7 (8.9)	34 (32.1)	41	
Father's Education				
Illiterate	2(4.09)	17 (14.91)	19	3.21
Read and Write	2(2.15)	8(7.85)	10	
Primary	10(9.26)	33(33.74)	43	
Secondary	2(3.23)	13(11.77)	15	
College	12(9.26)	31(33.74)	43	
Mother's Employment Status				
Employed	6 (5.22)	19(19.78)	25	6.50**
Self-employed	2(7.10)	32(26.9)	34	
Homemaker	20(15.67)	55(59.33)	75	
Father's Employment Status				
Employed	18(12.8)	45(50.2)	63	6.25*
Self-employed	3(7.7)	35(30.3)	38	
Pensioner	5(5.5)	22(21.5)	27	
Place of Residence				
Urban ^a	8(17.9)	87(77.8)	95	7.64**
Sub-urban ^b	16(7.2)	22(31.1)	38	
Rural	2(.94)	3(4.1)	5	

** P <.01, * P <.05,

^a Included cities like: Addis Ababa, Diredawa, Nazerth, Bahirdar, Jimma, Dessie, Gondar, Awassa and Harar.

^b This included respondents who come from towns with more than ten thousand residents.

^c All values are corrected for continuity.

Relationship between Socio-demographic characteristics and Initial Commitment

As depicted in Table 1, the results of the Chi-square analysis with initial commitment as dependent variable revealed that field of study

($\chi^2 = 10.68$, $p < .05$, $df = 1$), mother's employment status ($\chi^2 = 6.50$, $p < .05$, $df = 2$), father's employment status ($\chi^2 = 6.25$, $p < .05$, $df = 2$), and place of residence ($\chi^2 = 21.64$, $p < .0001$, $df = 2$) were significant. On the other hand, no significant relationship was obtained between initial commitment to teaching and gender, and parental education (mother's and father's education).

Specifically, a difference in initial commitment to teaching was uncovered between Social Science and Natural Science freshman teacher education students. That is, a sizable number of students from Social Science stream (32.8%) preferred to take up teaching career while only 1% (7) of the Natural Science students did the same. This is probably because most students of the natural sciences aspired fields like engineering, pharmacy, and statistics as can be discerned from their choices in this study (see Table 5).

Similarly, student's initial commitment was also significantly associated with both father's and mother's employment status. A close inspection of the observed and expected frequencies, however, revealed (see Table 1) a different pattern of relationship. That is, more students with homemaker and less with self-employed mothers reported to have been initially committed than actually expected from statistical standpoint. On the contrary, large proportion of students with employed fathers reported to be initially committed. The pattern of relationship is, however, the same with cases of students with self-employed fathers.

With regard to place of residence, significantly less proportion of student teachers who came from major cities like Addis Ababa, Awassa, Nazareth, Jimma, and Diredawa and towns like, Dilla, Abomssa, Fenoteselam, and Debrebirhan reported to be committed as opposed to those with rural backgrounds. This result may not be surprising, since students with non-rural background seem to aspire a non-teaching occupation that offer better status and prestige due to the influence of money-oriented lifestyles in urban areas. A similar

finding was observed in a study conducted among trainee teachers in Nigeria (Awanbor 1996).

Attitude to Teaching as a Career: Effect of Gender and Achievement

Before the detailed statistical analyses of the factors that are assumed to affect the students' choice of teaching career, gender differences were explored in their ESLCE and First year first semester DCTEHS-GPAs and the mean scores in Attitude towards Teaching Profession (ATP) scale.

With regard to this, a statistically significant gender difference ($t = 4.03$, $p < .001$, $df = 126$) was obtained only in the case of ESLCE GPA. This may be because the Ministry of Education assigned more female students to the colleges with lower ESLCE GPA due to the affirmative action program for female students. On the other hand, in 1998/1999 academic years, proportionally more male students joined colleges with higher ESLCE GPAs. So the difference may be attributed to the differences in their entry requirements. It is important to note, however, that no systematic difference was obtained between males and females in their first year college achievement. This may be attributed partly to low correlation coefficient obtained between ESLCE and first semester GPA. DCTEHS- PA ($r = .09$, ns). This in turn confirms the doubts that researchers have about the predictive validity of ESLCE as an independent predictor of freshmen GPA (Fantu *et al.* 1996).

Table 2: Correlation and T-test Results by Gender

Variables	Male (N=116)	Female (N = 21)	t-value	Corr.
ESLCE GPA(X)				
Mean	3.49	3.29	4.03*	$r_{xy} = .09$
SD	.25	.21		ns
95% CI	(.098, .297)			
DCTEHS GPA(Y)				
Mean	2.44	2.45	-0.09	$r_{yz} = -.25$
SD	.53	.46		$P < .01$
95% CI				
ATP (Z)				
Mean	30.95	29.76	-1.66	$r_{yz} = -.07,$ ns
SD	4.01	2.90		
95% CI	(-2.66, .27)			

* $p < .001$, $df = 126$, ns = not significant

** The Maximum possible score on the attitude scale is 50

ATP = Attitude towards Teaching Profession

ESLCE-GPA = Ethiopian School Leaving Certificate Examination Grade point average

DCTEHS-GPA = Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences Grade Point Average (Semester I)

The attitude held about teaching career among college students generally seems to be low (i.e. the obtained average attitude score for both sexes was 30 while the maximum possible score was 50). Regarding the mean ATP scores, no gender difference was found. This reveals that boys and girls have similar attitude towards teaching profession. The finding conflicts with earlier findings that assumed teaching as job of females (Tesfaye 1997; Abebayehu 1995).

It is also interesting to note that ESLCE GPA is inversely related to ATP ($r = -.25$, $p < .001$). A student with a higher ESLCE GPA scored low in ATP scale and those with less ESLCE GPA scored high in ATP scale. This may be because students who scored high in ESLCE tend to expect the so-called prestigious professions like Medicine, Engineering, Business and Economics as opposed to those students with relatively less mean ESLCE GPA. However, this is not to argue that there existed a truly causal relationship between ESLCE GPA

and ATP scores. But there seems to prevail high expectation among those students with relatively higher ESLCE GPA to join the so called prestigious fields due to the previous practice of assigning students who hold higher ESLCE GPA to fields like Medicine and Engineering. It is assumed that missing the chance of long aspired fields together with the pervading attitude already held might have elevated their ATP scores. This argument partly confirmed the remarks frequently made while responding to open-ended questions. The responses go: “ *I don’t deserve to be a teacher with such a high ESLCE GPA.*” Some others claim “ *The very reason why I worked very hard and achieved very high in the ESLCE was not to get into the teaching profession*”.

From the above results and respondents' statements, it may be argued that previous assignments of students into colleges by mere ESLCE results (high scorers to prestigious fields and low scorers to education) had left a scar that persists till today. Can it be inferred that the new policy of assigning students into colleges is not internalized or welcomed?

Table 3: Mean and SDs of Rankings on the Importance of Reasons for Not Joining Teaching as Career

Reasons that discourage taking the teaching career	Mean Rank*	SD	Rank
Society's low attitude for the profession	2.48	1.39	1
Less economic benefit	2.71	1.47	2
Less chance for career advancement	3.29	1.58	4
Low base salary	3.14	1.56	3
Unattractive privilege associated with the career	4.00	1.43	5
High probability of working in remote areas	5.03	1.59	6

$\chi^2 = 148.45$, $df = 5$, $p < .00001$

* Low ranks indicate more importance attached to the reasons i.e. 1= very important, 6= least important.

The Friedman two-way analysis of variance which has a distribution like the Chi-square, revealed an overall statistically significant difference in the degree of importance attached to the six different

reasons that are thought to make college students not take up a teaching job. According to the results in Table 3, the respondents seem to give much emphasis to their own perceptions about society's attitude to the profession, economically less rewarding - low base salary. The multiple comparison tests (see Table 4) further revealed that society's attitude to the profession surpassed in importance other factors like base salary, chance for career advancement, privilege associated with the job, and the kind of work place expected. However, the economic reward that teaching profession may offer and society's low attitude to the profession did not differ to a statistically significant extent ($p > .05$). In contrast, the expected place of work upon graduation markedly differed ($p < .001$) compared with the remaining five factors. This depicts that place of work as a teacher was not considered as a major cause for not joining the career.

Similarly, the privilege that teaching career may be expected to offer came out as the next less important reason compared with society's low attitude, economic benefits associated with teaching career as well as the perceived chance for career advancement. To confirm the order of rankings as statistically acceptable the Page's test² for ordered alternatives was used. The results revealed a statistically significant difference among the ordered alternatives ($Z_L = 9.94$, $P = .0000$). That is the ordering of "society's low attitude for the profession" as the most important and "high probability of working in the remote areas" as the least important was found to be the correct ordering of the reasons based on the importance attached to them. In short, we can safely conclude from the results that the reasons depicted 1 to 6 in order of magnitude from (see Table 3) were found to be the correct ordering of the reasons that discourage college student from taking up teaching career.

Table 4: Multiple Comparison Test for Mean Rankings of the Reasons that Discourage Teaching Career. (N = 118)

Reasons that discourage teaching career	Mean	1	2	3	4	5	6
Society's low attitude for the profession	2.48	-	.23	.66*	.81*	1.52**	2.55**
Economically less beneficial	2.71		-	.43	0.58	1.29**	2.32**
Less chance for career advancement	3.14			-	0.15	0.86*	1.89**
Base salary is low	3.29				-	0.71*	1.74**
Privilege associated with the career is not attractive	4.00					-	1.03*
High probability of working in remote areas	5.03						-

*p < .05, ** P < .001,

^athe difference of the mean rankings = | R_u - R_v | ≥ 0.645, Z_{.001667} = 2.903

Where, R_u is mean rank of u's ordering

R_v is the mean rank of v's ordering

The Preferred Fields of Study outside the Teaching Career

In this study an attempt was also made to find out which areas of study are most preferred by the respondents who do not want to join teaching career. The following table depicts the fields the respondents aspired to join before their assignment to the Teacher Education Faculty of the College.

Table 5: Students' Preference of Fields other than Teaching

Fields of study	N	%	Rank
Health Sciences	4	3.7	6
Engineering	27	25	2
Business and Economics	48	44.4	1
Pharmacy	7	6.5	4
Social and Behavioral Science ^a	10	9.3	3
Computer Science and Statistics	9	8.3	5
Agriculture	3	2.8	7
Total	108	100	

^aIncludes: Sociology, Political Science, and Psychology

As shown in Table 6, more students prefer joining fields outside teaching. A close inspection of the table discloses that business and economics, engineering, social and behavioral sciences are the three most preferred followed by pharmacy, statistics and computer

science, while agriculture and health sciences are the least preferred. The reasons attached to the preferences have been put in order of importance based on the subjects' responses.

Table 6: Difference in Mean Rankings^a of the Reasons to Prefer Non-Teaching Fields

Reasons that encourage non-teaching career	Mean	1	2	3	4	5
Interest to study the field	1.62	-	1.03*	1.58**	1.79**	2.50**
Perceived economic benefits	2.65	-	-	0.55	0.76*	1.47**
Perceived social status	3.20	-	-	-	0.21	0.92*
Possible chance of getting prestigious careers	3.41	-	-	-	-	0.71*
Influence of parents and significant others	4.12	-	-	-	-	-

$\chi^2 = 172.65$, $df = 4$, $p = .0000$

* $p < .05$, ** $P < .001$,

^aThe difference of the mean rankings = $|R_u - R_v| \geq 0.60$, $Z_{.0025} = 2.801$

The multiple comparison procedure revealed that interest to study the field as the most important reason compared to all others listed. The importance attached to perceived economic benefits and the social status that the profession may offer did not differ to statistically significant extent. However, the respondents did not want to compromise the perceived economic benefits for the influence of parents and significant others in the choice of a given field or the probability that they might get prestigious jobs because they joined a particular field of study.

Predictors of Student Teacher's Initial Commitment to Teaching

As depicted in the inter-correlation matrix, those independent variables that have a statistically significant association with the dependent dichotomous variables were selected to be included in the logistic regression model. The variables were entered using the forward selection procedure. Table 7 depicts the results.

Table 7: Inter-correlation, Means, and SD's of the Selected Study Variables (N = 138)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	SD	
ICT ^a		.67***	.05	.06	.18***	.25***	.10	.11*	-.29***	-.12	1.75	.42	
ATP ^b			.25**	-.05	.02	.11	-.09	-.25**	-.07	.01	23.07	9.96	
Mother's Education				.15	.04	.18***	.25***	-.08	.01	-.10	2.95	1.71	
Father's Education						.34**	.04	-.04	.14	.05	3.22	1.83	
Mother's Employment							.15**	.13	-.08	.12	.10	2.33	.90
Father's Employment								-.04	-.29***	.01	-.07	1.75	.82
Gender									-.28**	.04	.08	1.19	.40
Place of residence										.09	.05	3.48	.25
ESLCE-GPA											-.09	2.52	.56
DCTEHS-GPA												1.75	.44

*** p <.001, ** P <.01, *p < .05.,

^aICT= Initial commitment to Teaching

^b ATP=Attitude towards teaching profession.

On the basis of the results of the correlation coefficient, initial commitment was found to be significantly related with ATP, ESLCE-GPA, DCTEHS-GPA, mother's employment status, and father's employment status. Thus, these variables were selected as important potential predictors of freshmen students' initial commitment to teaching. Before running the analyses, however, the variables mother's employment and father's employment status were dummy coded (i.e. employed coded as 1 and others coded as 0). Following this, further analysis was made using a forward entry option of the logistic regression analysis to screen out the most significant predictors of initial commitment to teaching.

Table 8: Logistic Regression Model with Initial Commitment

Variable	B	SE	Wald	df	R
ATP	.5246	.1703	9.488*	1	.291
ESLCE GPA	-11.71	4.50	6.762*	1	-.232
Constant	21.95	10.27	4.57	1	

*p < .01,

As can be seen from Table 8, the results of the logistic regression revealed that previous achievement (i.e., ESLCE GPA) and attitude towards the teaching profession (ATP) were the most important predictors of freshman teacher education students' initial commitment to teaching. Specifically, freshman students' ATP scores directly and significantly predicted the likelihood that they are committed to teaching. That is, favorable attitude towards teaching profession increases the likelihood of initial commitment to teaching and vice-versa. On the other hand, ESLCE GPA significantly but inversely predicted initial commitment. In other words, high ESLCE GPA decreases the likelihood of initial commitment to teaching while low ESLCE GPA increases the likelihood of initial commitment. Nonetheless, the remaining predictor variables (i.e. DCTEHS-GPA, mother's employment status, and father's employment status) that were entered into logistic regression model were removed from the final equation (see Table 8). This implies that first semester college GPA (DCTEHS-GPA), and parental employment status did not emerge as important predictors of initial commitment to teaching.

Table 9: Logistic Regression with Initial Commitment to Teaching as a Dependent Variable

Variables entered	-2 Log likelihood	Goodness of -fit	Model Chi-square ^b	Improvement Chi-square ^c	% of Correct prediction
Step 1 ESLCE GPA	42.52	39.98	46.10**	-	82.24
Step 2 ESLSE GPA + ATP	26.23	21.15	62.40**	16.30*	88.24

^p < .0001, ^{**} p < .00001

^b *df* = 1 (step 1), *df* = 2 (step 2)

^c *df* = 1

On top of this, the classification table of the logistic regression revealed 88.24% overall correct classification. As can be discerned from Table 9, the selection of ESLCE-GPA in step two significantly

improved (Improvement Chi-square = 16.30, $p < .0001$, $df = 1$) the final model. Further, the obtained Model Chi-square (Model-Chi-square = 62.40, $p < .00001$, $df = 2$) statistic shows that the final model with ATP and ESLCE-GPA as predictor variables did not differ to a statistically significant extent from a perfect model (Goodness-of-fit = 21.5, $df=121$, ns) since the observed probability level is well above the cut off percentage point (*SPSS Advanced Statistics User's Guide*, 1990:52).

Discussion

The present study was initiated out of a real professional concern for the deteriorating situation of teaching as a profession caused mainly by the declining interest among the new generation of college students in assuming the responsibility of teaching. Particular interest was on those students who have already started their training in the Faculty of Teacher Education, Dilla College of Teacher Education and Health Sciences, to be secondary school teachers.

With the objective of addressing this problem, data were collected on 138 freshmen degree students of the Faculty of Teacher Education, DCTEHS, in May 1998. Instruments to collect data were developed by the investigators. The ATP scale was used to assess the attitude of college students towards teaching profession. A questionnaire designed to provide data on whether or not college students prefer teaching as career, other fields that they have been aspiring, and the factors that encouraged them to assume these fields, and other socio-demographic factors was also used. In addition, data were further obtained on the participants' academic achievement in the college. Their ESLCE GPAs were obtained from the Registrar's Office of the college in order to make a comparison between them.

The study employed relevant statistical techniques to analyze the data. According to the results, as expected, substantially high proportion (78.3%) of the participants did not want to be teachers. Further, very few students from the natural science stream were

found to prefer teaching career as opposed to their counter parts in the social science stream. The explanation for this may be high ambition of those students to join fields like engineering; statistics and pharmacy (see Table 5). However, these students did not differ in their interest in teaching due to gender or mother's and fathers' status.

A close examination of the perceived reasons that discouraged the choice of teaching career was made using the Friedman 2 way ANOVA which revealed a statistically significant difference among the mean rankings of the reasons listed. The multiple comparison and the Page's test for ordered alternatives further indicated that perceived low social status, low/absence of economic incentives associated with teaching career, less chance to professional development, poor of base salary lack of privilege associated with teaching and working in the remote areas of the country came in their order of magnitude as discouraging factors when it comes to taking the teaching profession. Even though previous studies, to the knowledge the researchers, did not attempt to prioritize these impediments, similar reasons have been identified (e.g., Aklilu 1967; Amberber 1971; Menna and Tesfaye 1998). It can be noted, however, again that low social status which was found to be the least contributing factor by Aklilu (1967) is becoming one on top of other contributing factors. This conforms with Menna and Tesfaye (1998). As the choices that college students make and the explanation they provide were essential to address the problem, subjects were requested to rank order the various areas of studies of their interest. Among these the frequently chosen fields were business and economics (44%), engineering (25%), social and behavioral sciences, (9.3 %) and so forth. As can be inferred by and large, these fields do not lend themselves to teaching career – and are perceived to have a high demand in the labor market as non-teaching fields. The students were further asked to rank order their reasons for choosing the areas they did. A Friedman two-way ANOVA followed by a multiple comparison test showed a significant difference in the ranking of the reasons that encouraged them to choose the above non-teaching fields of study. Accordingly, interest

to study the subject, perceived economic incentive, perceived social status the field might offer, opportunities to open up avenues of employment in more prestigious occupations, and influence of parents and significant others were found to be the ordering of the reasons that encouraged the respondents to prefer those subject(s)/fields. The finding disclosed interest to study the subject as a prominent reason for students' choice of a given subject. However, it is very important to note the role that our perception of people around us, and society's attitude towards a given profession influences our preferences, attitudes and choices (Bogozzi 1981). Therefore, it appears difficult to claim that interest to study the field is independent of the influences of the students' perceptions with regard to economic incentives, social status enjoyed, and opportunities to join other jobs that offer high status and prestige.

From the above findings, therefore, it could be argued that though every successive regime [especially the FDRE] has addressed the issue of teachers and teaching profession (Seyoum 1996: 30) no improvements have come out as a result.

The other important finding revealed by the logistic regression analysis was the significantly strong relationship obtained between ESLCE GPA and ATP scores as related to students' preference to teaching career. The association of a very high likelihood of preference for teaching with high scores in ATP can be expected due to the existing strong association between attitude and behavior or future intentions (Bogozzi 1981). Similarly high ESLCE-GPA was found to decrease the likelihood of preferring the teaching career. This result corroborates Schlechty and Vance's (1981) findings that indicated low interest as factor discouraging high achieving college students in western context when it comes to choosing the teaching career. Low attitude towards the profession would lead to poor study practice which would in turn result in academic failure at the college or poor performance in the career later on.

Conclusions

In brief, the present study disclosed that very low proportion of college freshmen (only 25.4%) at the Faculty of Teacher Education at DCTEHS has preference and positive attitude towards the teaching career. The overwhelming majority (i.e., 74.6 percent) is not happy with the profession but yet continued training in spite of lack of interest. The discouraging reasons were low societal attitude to the career, and absence of economic incentives and low chance for personal development. On the other hand, perceived status and prestige that the job might offer are the major encouraging factors. As a matter of fact, the above finding may not be surprising since Aklilu (1967), Menna and Tesfaye (2000) have come up with a result that only 20% and 22% respectively of their respondents have reported to have interest in the profession. Therefore, since an unknown time, a great majority of secondary school teachers are taking up the job without interest and preference partly because they are placed to the college forcibly, or assigned to the teaching profession without being trained as professional teachers (Tekeste, 1990), or have no other choices. In addition, those with good academic achievement in the ESLCE do not want to be teachers and as a result the attitude towards teaching is inversely related to achievement in ESLCE. This in turn suggests that it is only those with low academic caliber that are likely to remain teachers. Those with high academic ability do not want to join in.

From findings of research in the area (e.g., Menna and Tesfaye 1998; Aklilu 1967) and close observations by authorities charged with the responsibilities of training of teachers (e.g. Tekelhaimanot 2000) it may be boldly argued that preferences and attitude towards the teaching profession have declined over the last four decades and still continue to do so.

It appears that pre-service training of teachers is undergoing a serious challenge due to the declining interest of new teachers particularly at diploma and degree levels. Worse, retaining

experienced teaching force appears to be under serious threat leave alone attracting the new generation of young and committed teachers. It is, therefore, worth seeking ways and means of (1) improving teachers' social-status through improving their workplace conditions, financial situations, and professional development (2) empowering teachers to create conducive school organizational culture and student behavior, (3) fostering transparent, democratic and participatory decision making on issues that affect them and their students (For example, in curriculum development, teachers' promotion and transfer, and student disciplinary issues) by way of eliminating incompetent and prejudiced administrative practices at Wereda, Zone and Regional levels. Attending to the above mentioned pitfalls might serve as a point of departure for attracting new university entrants to the teaching career.

Though the problem seems to persist for long, as shown above, it may be premature to conclude that the teaching profession is at risk as the data gathered are limited in size and scope. Thus, future research with a larger sample covering the existing higher education institutions may be desired to arrive at conclusive results. Despite the inherent limitations of the present study, the above findings seem to provide compelling evidence to professionals and teacher trainers. Thus, training institutions, at least in the short run, should seek better ways of attracting retaining beginning teachers who join teaching by incorporating materials in professional courses that facilitate the affective aspect of teaching profession. Such efforts could influence the attitude of new entrants and boost career choice commitment in favor of teaching. This is believed to contribute to mitigating the risk of attrition even after joining teacher education colleges.

Notes

1. The details of causes of teacher education students' one month long strike was adequately provided in Teklehaimanot Hailesilasse (2000). Secondary Teacher Education in Ethiopia: A New Perspective, IER *Flambeau*, 7(20), 1-15

2. The computation mean rankings of the ordering of the perceived reasons that encourage or discourage the choice of teaching career were performed using Page's test following a significant test of the Friedman ANOVA which is distributed like a chi-square. A detailed review of this procedure followed in this study is provided in Siegel and Castellan (1988). *Non-Parametric Statistics for Social and Behavioral Sciences* (2ed). A similar procedure was employed by Temesgen Zeweter (1996), in his "comparative statistical study of major discipline choice of science freshmen students" *The Ethiopian Journal of Education, Vol. XVI, No.1*

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