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Don Alexander
University of Queensland

David Chant
University of Queensland

Bernard Cox
University of Queensland

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WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO BECOME TEACHERS

Don Alexander, David Chant and Bernard Cox
The University of Queensland

Introduction

There is no shortage of attempts to explain why people want to be teachers, and many of these attempts are used to frame this paper. Most of the research cited comes from the United States, some comes from Australia, and a few references are made to research from other countries. What attracts people to teaching has been a popular research theme for several decades, and it has been simultaneously quite popular in many countries. In Israel, for example, 9.9% of all educational research done between 1974 and 1985 related to "teachers' education, attitudes and behaviours" (Peritz, 1989:62). Prominent among the questions were why people wanted to be teachers in the first place, and what motivated them to make the choice. From almost all the studies, something loosely called "altruism" provided the most compelling answer to the question of why the choice was made. Joseph and Green's (1986:31) study offers the conclusion: "...indeed, there may be few reasons for considering the teaching profession except the altruistic motive."

Associate Literature

Joseph and Green's (1986) review of the literature suggests eight themes, or reasons, for entering teaching. Five reasons parallel themes constructed from Lortie's (1975) regularly cited research. These are: working with people, or young people; being of service; continuing an involvement within an educational setting; material benefits and security; and time compatibility, particularly for young mothers wishing to combine a career with raising children. To these reasons, Joseph and Green (1986:29) add three further themes drawn from the literature. First, is the need for stimulation; the need for an absorbing career and the desire for creativity. Second, is the ability to influence others, and the others include parents, spouses and other teachers, not just pupils. Third, are the psychological motivations focussed on the needs and desires for authority, "children's love, to entertain people and to be in a field that is not competitive" (Joseph and Green, 1986:29).

Other researchers have identified several more motives. Thirty years ago, Haubrich (1960:382) noted that job security, or the mattress factor,

"something to fall back on", was a major motive for choosing teaching as a career, and he reasoned that this may be "an entirely tenable rationale for some individuals who see little economic or social security in today's world". This view may be equally applicable today, due to the wide-scale decline in the availability of professional work. An interesting contrast is provided by the Book, Freeman and Brousseau (1985:29) survey which showed 28% of responses to the question, "...why you have not considered teaching as a career" dealt with inadequate teachers' salaries. The negative manner in which the question was framed could have had an adverse effect on the answers, and, of course, the question was asked of those who had already decided not to be teachers.

The impact of "others" persists as an important factor. Daniel and Ferrell (1991:1) feel that the influence of students' parents has decreased as a motivational force in career decision-making, and it has been supplanted by the "influence of students' former teachers". Lortie (1986:152) agrees that "teachers have played a significant role in recruiting new members for the profession". Book and Freeman (1986:49) cite figures to support this view, and they note that a higher percentage of secondary candidates (32%) than elementary teacher candidates (21%) claimed former teachers as being particularly influential in their decisions to become teachers. Roberson, Keith and Page (1983:13) also conclude that former teachers were the "most influential factor" in the career choices of education students.

Of course, altruism still seems to rank high among the attractions to teaching, but there are others which are hard to classify. Jantzen (1981:47) found that "advancement, obligation to society because of a need for teachers, retirement provisions, and tenure..." had become less important over time, while Daniel and Ferrell (1991:10) believe "aspects of personal enrichment afforded by teaching" are on the ascendancy as motivational factors. In a similar vein, Roberson, Keith and Page (1983:13) conclude that teacher aspirants are influenced by a desire to work with friendly people, and "...are not especially concerned with 'success'". In the Roberson et al. study, job satisfaction was ranked higher than both salary and job security.

There has been a "definite shift in perspective" from "negative images and comments about the teaching profession" according to Bontempo and Digman (1985:9). They believe that while students recognise that the teaching profession needs improvements, they are more hopeful that the images and realities of teaching are changing for the better. This is not the view of Sykes (1983:88-89) who contends that "the best and brightest among college-educated blacks and women have turned to more lucrative and prestigious careers than teaching — careers that were denied them until recently." These opinions are drawn from optimism. This may be because the essays were associated with an application to be a student teacher the following year. Variables such as gender, ethnicity and educational achievement as measured by grade point average, although available to the researchers, were not used to structure the gathering of data, and the data collected for this study were not used in any way to establish the academic quality of the applicants.

A number of the concerns about the motivation for a teaching career can be linked to teacher recruitment. Times of anticipated teacher shortages are "most notably linked to proliferation of research on career motivation" (Daniel and Ferrell, 1991:5). These shortages are identified with the 1950s and 1960s, "years characterised by increased teacher shortages following the post WW2 baby boom [and] a period of much research on the topic of reasons why people teach". (See, for example, Jantzen, 1981; Roberson et al. 1983.) The fashionable aspects of such research now are probably nowhere near what they were then. Teacher gluts have not tended to encourage career choice research. Consequently, this current study of initial teacher motivation seeks some of its justification in the dearth of studies during times of oversupply. Most motivation studies are removed from the question of employment availability.

Among the positive features to emerge as a result of these motivational studies, according to Knight, Duke and Palcic (1988:28), is the laying to rest of some "myths and stereotypes about prospective teachers". These include such notions as "future teachers are drawn from the least capable students that attend colleges and universities". It does depend on how the calculations take place, as well as the criteria used, but such notions would likely prevail on most Australian campuses. Bontempo and Digman, (1985:1) refer to surveys in the United States which indicate that "education majors tend to be at the bottom rung of the achievement ladder", while Anderson (1987:48) is more charitable about Australian teacher trainees. He

claims that in spite of more demands being placed on tertiary institutions for admission, "teacher trainees remain of average scholastic attainment and of average social background".

Although the data from the study reported here show no appreciable difference in motivation between males and females, this has not been the case with all studies of motivation to be teachers. Joseph and Green (1986:30) found agreement between men and women on the most significant reasons for entering teaching. However, teaching as a career "still has a higher status for women than for men." Brookhart and Freeman (1992:41) found from their review of 44 studies of entering teacher candidates, that the percentages of males were higher in secondary candidates than in elementary candidates." The reverse is the case in the sample from the University of Queensland, but, again, the data with which we are making comparisons are largely American data. Different conditions may produce different outcomes.

Among the Australian studies of what beckons people to be teachers are one from Tasmania and one from Queensland. The Tasmanian study done by Abbott-Chapman, Hull, McCann and Wylde (1991) is a very extensive study which used 1787 Tasmanian students from years 9-12. They found from this sample population that the human relations aspects of teaching are paramount in intending students' thinking (Abbott-Chapman et al., 1991:112). This concurs with findings from most countries where similar research has taken place. Another study, from the Queensland Board of Teacher Education (1987:63), has speculated on several attractions to the teaching profession. They believe the public image may be a determinant, along with the fact that, until recently, the preservice teacher education courses provided only a diploma, while entry to most other professions is by the attainment of a degree. Several studies from non-English speaking countries provide perspectives about gender and being a teacher. In Sweden, "women are concentrated in shorter educational programs within the care and educational sectors" and make up 80% of the total education student body (Elgqvist-Saltzman, 1992:45). In Poland, there appears to be a "strong tendency for women to be concentrated in certain subject areas, notably humanities, health, education and economics". In the Polish education departments of higher education institutions, women represent 74% of students (Watson, 1992:132). These are insignificant instances from which to generalise, however, it is clear that gender does not function the same way, universally, as a structuring element.

The socialisation of men and women into some careers over others is an important issue, but too large to be explored here, especially since our data give us no encouragement for such an exploration. We are specifically interested in why this particular group of student teachers chose to be teachers.

Context of the Study

Within the Graduate School of Education, at The University of Queensland, is a preservice secondary school teacher qualification called the Postgraduate Diploma in Education. In these times of teacher oversupply in most secondary school subjects, people wishing to become secondary teachers are drawn to the Diploma because it carries the status of The University of Queensland, but also because Diploma students from recent years have had a higher percentage of success with obtaining teaching positions than any other teacher training institution in Queensland. Accurate figures are difficult to provide, but informed estimates put the success rate from last year (1992) at about 75%.

The data used for this study are essays written by 399 of the approximately 800 applicants to be part of the Postgraduate Diploma in Education class of 1993, of whom 199 were ultimately successful, 111 rejected the offer of a place and 89 had their application rejected. The task was unstructured, and the instruction required the applicants to make a handwritten statement about reasons for wanting to become a teacher in secondary schools and, personal qualities and experiences that would help the person to become a teacher.

The essays were not used as criteria for selection into the course, though some thought has been given to using some such technique in the future. It is necessary to be competent in written and spoken English to function effectively in Queensland school, and such a technique as using a written essay could become a standard inclusion in future Diploma applications. The essays revealed quite a few candidates whose written English would be a concern in the classroom.

All of the essays used come from people who had self-selected to become teachers. The possession of a degree with acceptable subjects, plus an oral test of proficiency in English for a few students, are the only requirements for entering the Postgraduate Diploma in Education course at The University of Queensland. Burnard and Rawlinson (1984:30) contend that "self-selection relies on self-awareness, self-assessment and judgemental strategies". The scripts used in this study were written as a part of the application for the

Postgraduate Diploma in Education. Candidates were asked to respond in their own handwriting to two stimuli:

- (i) *my reasons for wanting to become a teacher in secondary schools;*
- (ii) *my personal qualities and experiences that would help me become a teacher.*

Methods

The themes were initially extracted by the application of principal component analysis (PCA) to the relative frequencies of "stems" (ie, collections of reasonably synonymous words). Note that this highly quantitative process is meant to complement the informed scanning of the text, and is not intended as a substitute for examining the richness of expression in the original texts. PCA provides a means of mapping recurrent groups of stems back into the mass of original transcript (approximately 400 pages), and having done so, plays no further part in the qualitative process of identification of themes.

Establishment of Stems

The 399 transcripts provided 58,885 words, with 4,491 of them being distinct (eg, at this completely disaggregated level, assist and assists would be treated as distinct words). An iterative process of informed scanning aggregates the distinct words into groups, or stems, of reasonably synonymous words. This process is undertaken independently by different researchers and involves: (i) grouping like words together (eg, different tenses of the same verb, singular and plural of the same noun, synonymous words; for example, in Table 1, the stem labelled "assist" contains the individual words: assist, assistance, assistant, assistantship, assisted, assisting, help, helped, helpful, helping, helps); (ii) checking the stems against the original transcripts to ensure that the same word being used in different contexts or with different meanings appears in different stems (eg, state as a verb or a noun); and (iii) repeating steps (i) and (ii). When reasonable consensus within and between researchers is achieved, one consolidated set of words and their associated stems is used in the next stage of the analysis. This study settled on 369 stems consolidating 2,881 of the 4,491 distinct words (ie, 64.1%) and 25,140 of the 58,885 original words (ie, 42.3%). Note that many words (eg, prepositions and conjunctions) are eliminated from analytic process in step (i) simply by not being allocated to any group.

Principal Component Analysis

In this analysis, the applicant forms the unit record. The relative frequency of occurrence of each of the 369 stems is then established for each of the 399 applicants. In a formal statistical sense, there are $n=399$ observations and 369 analysis variables, each variable measuring a relative frequency. Using relative frequency instead of frequency obviates inflating the importance of words that naturally occur a lot (eg, I, me, teacher) and helps to ensure that verbose and terse applicants stand on equal footings in the analytic process. As an example, the stem "me" occurs 389 times in the transcripts; the first transcript in the data base contains "me" 6 times in a total of 268 appearances of the stems, giving a relative frequency of $6/268=.022$. A PCA analysis is then applied to these relative frequencies. This quantitative process was carried out using macros written for SAS statistical software. The macros draw heavily on the manipulative facilities in the SAS data step and a number of SAS procedures, principally FREQ and PRINCOMP (SAS, 1987; 1988a; 1988b; 1988c).

Table 1 presents some features of the process for three of the eight themes pursued in this paper and the results of the PCA. The qualitative description of the themes is derived in the next section. The software assigns a representative name to the stem

and they appear in the first columns of Table 1; these names do not necessarily correspond to a known word in the English language and will often appear as a truncated version of one of the words making up the stem. The second column lists the frequency of occurrence of the stem in the transcripts of the 399 applicants (eg, the stem "school" - or the words making up that stem appears in Theme 2 and occurs 850 times in all). The loadings in the third column of Table 1 can be interpreted as the raw Pearson correlation between the stem and the theme. Interpretable loadings are set to lower absolute values than in quantitative work using accepted, focussed measurement scales because of the exploratory nature of the task in hand and the diffuse nature of the raw materials (ie, the statements in the transcripts). Also, with 369 stems under consideration, the average variance accounted for by a theme is just 0.27%, hence a theme accounting for more than 2.7% of the variance takes up more than ten times the average. Based on this arbitrary numerical criterion of a theme explaining more than 2.7% of the variance, plus the substantive criterion of identifiability of the theme, eight themes were chosen for further analysis. The signs of the loadings are arbitrary and only their magnitude is of importance.

Table 1. *Structure of the First Three Themes*

Stem	n	Loading	Words making up the stem
me	389	-.25	me
assist	276	-.31	assist, assistance, assistant, assistantship, assisted, assisting, help, helped, helpful, helping, helps
langua	153	.31	language, language-related, languages
qualit	134	-.46	qualities, quality
good	132	-.29	good
lifes	113	.25	life, lifes
patien	110	-.42	patience, patient, patiently, patients
austra	98	.44	Australia, Australian, Australians, Australia's
groups	68	-.31	group, groups
dealin	50	-.31	deal, dealing, dealings, deals, dealt
passed	48	.26	pass, passed, passes, passing
new	41	.29	new

Theme 1. *Patience is an important quality helping teachers deal with groups of young Australians.*

Stem	n	Loading	Words making up the stem
myself	1281	.26	my, myself
school	850	-.30	school, schooling, schools, schoolwork, secondary, secondary-school
year_o	384	-.36	year, year-old, years
enjoya	269	-.34	enjoy, enjoyable, enjoyed, enjoying, enjoyment
qualit	134	.32	qualities, quality
establ	123	-.31	establish, established, establishment, find, finding, found
patien	110	.29	patience, patient, patiently, patients
austra	98	.37	Australia, Australian, Australians, Australia's
course	84	.40	course, courses, coursework
better	53	.28	best, better, betterment
new	41	.33	new

Theme 2. *The quality of my own enjoyment of schooling and Teaming has led me to turn to teaching as a vocation.*

Stem	n	Loading	Words making up the stem
impart	1497	-.35	impart, imparted, imparting, instruct, instructed, instructing, instruction, instructional, instructor, instructors, taught, teach, teacher, teacher-aide, teacher-librarian, teacher-student, teachers, teaches, teaching, tuition, tutor, tutoring, tutored, tutorial, tutorials, tutoring
employ	570	.33	employable, employed, employee, employees, employer, employing, employment, job, jobs, occupation, occupational, occupations, profession, professional, professionally, professionals, professions, vocation, vocational, vocationally, work, worked, worker, workers, workforce, working, workings, workplace, works, workshops
oldest	370	.48	age, aged, ages, old, older, oldest, olds, young, younger, youngest, youngster, youth, youths
tertia	162	-.27	tertiary, uni, univ, universitas, university, university's, uq
good	132	-.26	good
keenly	99	-.29	keen, keenly, love, lover, loves, loving
groups	68	.32	group, groups
comple	64	.27	complete, completed, completely, completing, completion
artist	33	.29	art, artistic, arts

Theme 3. *Imparting love of Teaming as a vocation.*

Large absolute values of the principal components (eg, the extreme 5% from each tail of their distributions) provide maps of occurrences of stems back into the original transcripts, allowing a proper qualitative discussion of the themes being raised by the applicants.

The principal components were regressed on possible explanatory variables to see if any discriminatory power could be attributed to them (these variables are: (i) source - accepted the offer of a place, rejected the offer of a place, not offered a place; (ii) gender; (iii) age). There were no

statistically significant relationships between any of these variables and the principal components, justifying the use of the results for all 399 applicants, rather than the 199 who accepted the offer of a place.

Themes From Intending Teachers

From the analyses of the candidates' scripts, eight principal components were extracted that corresponded to meaningful themes. These themes recur in the writing of many students. The themes were constructed by scanning instances among the

scripts where key stems were prominent. A few words were added to make some of the themes more comprehensible.

The themes are presented according to the amount of variance accounted for by each in the statements as a whole. For example, theme one accounted for more of the variance in the text than theme two, and so on. We list the eight themes and examples of them taken from the scripts. The percentage variance explained by the theme is also given.

Theme 1. (3.5%) *Patience is an important quality helping teachers deal with groups of young Australians.*

I am easy-going and affable, and have always got on well with teenagers.

Many qualities go into making a good teacher. However, the most important, I feel, are patience and understanding.

... I have a caring, patient and friendly nature, qualities which have helped me in the past, and would enable me to relate to fellow teachers and students in the future.

Theme 2. (3.5%) *The quality of my own enjoyment of schooling and Teaming has led me to turn to teaching as a vocation.*

I wish to be a secondary school teacher because I believe students at this level have gained a number of basic competencies and it would be rewarding to continue their education at a more advanced level.

I want to become a teacher in secondary schools because I would like to pass on my expertise to the younger generation and to encourage their academic ability.

Experience as a tutor has given me an insight into the nature of teaching and I am sure that I would find a career in teaching rewarding and challenging.

Theme 3. (3.3%) *Imparting love of Teaming as a vocation.*

I have a great love for both Chemistry and Biology; I believe I have adequate knowledge in both areas and I am enthusiastic about passing my knowledge on to others.

Since graduating from school, teaching has always been a career option for me. This is even more so since I began working at _____ Lutheran College.

I enjoy the subject of mathematics and I would like to impart some of my knowledge and skills to students.

Theme 4. (3.3%) *(My) keenness to share knowledge.*

I believe that my desire to impart my knowledge onto others along with my long time desire to help people in some way, will ensure my success as a teacher.

I wish to teach because of my love of knowledge and the joy I have at being able to share the knowledge and learning I have with others.

I have always enjoyed learning and speaking another language. I would therefore like to bring my own enthusiasm into the classroom along with my experiences.

Theme 5. (3.2%) *(My) anticipated successful completion of the Diploma.*

I have for some years, since year 12 (1982), almost ten years ago, wanted to teach.

All my life I have aspired to become a teacher. Since studying at university I have come to realise the full value of my high school years. I enjoyed the close student relationships I enjoyed there. I hope to become a teacher such as them.

Although I postponed higher education and went on to gain different types of learning experiences, a desire for education for its own sake never left. I have now almost realised this desire, and I feel I have gained a measure of wisdom and have experienced many facets of learning which could be channelled to young adults in a mutually creative way.

Theme 6. (3.2%) *(My) general interest in knowing and sharing language and culture.*

I would like to utilise my university qualifications, life experiences and love of the English language.

I have chosen to study foreign languages in order to help equip our future Australians with skills to cope in a multi-cultural and ever changing society.

Japanese is the language of the future in Australia's economic plan and it is essential that secondary students develop an ability and

understanding of the Japanese language and culture.

Theme 7. (3.2%) My hopes of success in the Diploma (program) as a key to career opportunities.

I believe it (teaching) to be a prominent career and a profession of integrity and responsibility.

I feel that the teaching profession will allow me to combine my enthusiasm and creativity sufficiently to make for a rewarding job experience.

A career in education, from my perspective, represents a personally rewarding occupation that is more worthwhile and challenging than any of my previous positions.

Theme 8. (2.9%) Developing (personal) fascination with imparting knowledge.

I commenced my university degree studying Arts and Law and achieved well academically but subsequent work experience in the area left me disenchanted until I made the decision to become a teacher.

I have been employed as both a tertiary administrator and accountant over the past 7 years, and while I believe I have carried out these roles effectively, I have not achieved a sufficient degree of job satisfaction.

The pupils in my classes came from extremely diverse cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. Many of them had only recently moved to Berlin from Eastern Block countries and I had the challenging task of teaching them both English and German. I discovered during that year that teaching involves much more than conveying a subject matter to a classroom of children; and I learnt that to teach effectively it is of tantamount importance to understand the specific needs of each individual.

Commentary Within and Beyond the Themes

Because the research technique relies on relative frequency of occurrences, some comments which are important to just a few candidates are not reflected in the themes. Some of these comments relate to classroom discipline, for example, "I am not a strict disciplinarian, preferring to approach students as equals, and not subordinates". Concerns about discipline may become more wide-spread once the applicants are in the program. Several comments of a similar kind appeared, though not in sufficient proportions to

rate a separate theme. Another set of important comments that were infrequently stated had to do with work conditions. An example is "Teaching is a secure career with good holidays and pay." Quite a few other potential themes interested the researchers, however, unless there was fairly general expression among the applicants' essays, the item was not identified by the PCA.

In all, only eight meaningful themes were derived from about 400 pages of handwritten testimony. This may appear to be a small number of themes. It might reasonably be assumed that this results from the data consisting of repetitious statements. There are 399 similar, short statements from 399 candidates. Bearing this in mind, the statistical analyses have been quite discriminating. A number of remarks now follow, expanding on the eight themes and incorporating further perceptions of the meanings of the data.

Further Remarks

- (a) The over-riding finding is the remarkable homogeneity of the testimony supplied by the applicants. This is evidenced in the similarity or complementarity of several of the themes (see points (b), (c) and (e)). The homogeneity is evident across men and women applicants (there are no significant sex differences) and across applicants of different ages. Approximately 80% of the applicants would turn 21 in their Diploma year, having proceeded directly from school to university and thence to the Diploma year. The other 20% consist of older students, mainly in the 25 to 40 age bracket.

Two comments are offered on this homogeneity of response: (i) students may almost universally be writing what they think the Dean, who admits them to the program, wants to read, and (ii) any extension of the process of dumping key words (see methods, page 9) may well have coalesced some of these complementary themes, though some shades of meaning would have been lost in the process. This might have been exacerbated by the limited number of places in the program and the limited number of teaching positions available to successful Diplomates at the end of the year. Further research work is called for to test the sincerity of the responses in this "free" writing task.

- (b) Virtually all of the applicants' testimonies are heavily focussed on self. This is not surprising in view of the task that was set for them (see page 8). It is apparent in several of the themes;

for example, in Theme 8 in which self is the key idea. Despite the emphasis on self, there is also a widespread expression of altruistic ideals (see Themes 3, 4 and 6). The heavy focus on self may be a characteristic of applicants at the outset of their professional development program. They have come to the program after years of study aimed at enhancing their own academic knowledge. The aim of the Diploma program is personal and professional growth which is likely to produce a shift from self to pupil focus. The altruism provides a base for this shift, which is catalysed by the learning experiences in the program.

The ideas expressed in this point suggest in general terms that the motives for self-selection to be a teacher contribute well to the development of beginning teachers possessing such qualities as altruism, concern for others, and love of learning. These qualities are widely valued in teachers.

- (c) Complementing (a) and (b), it is remarkable that there are few statements about pay, conditions of work, job prospects and the like in the themes and in the statements written the applicants. Again, this may be a product of the idealism of the applicants or their sustained efforts to write what they think the Dean wanted to read.
- (d) Themes 1 and 2 identify commonly-expressed, reasonably specific personal attributes. Applicants who referred to patience and enjoyment of learning applied these attribute to themselves. The identification of enjoyment of learning as a career determinant is interesting. Perhaps teaching is the only career that many children observe in any detail over an extended period of time, albeit from a restricted perspective. The work of family members may become familiar to some children, and high school students may have part-time jobs, but ultimately teaching is the one vocation they can observe in any detail.
- (e) Themes 3, 4 and 6 reflect the over-riding ideas expressed in very many of the written statements. The motives for seeking entry to teaching as a career are expressions of the keenness of applicants to share their knowledge with others. Questions arising from this finding and worthy of later study include: Are teachers generally gregarious? And is this a personal characteristic needed for success in teaching? Does their altruism enhance teachers' work, or does it make them vulnerable to hurt?

(f) Themes 5 and 7 are expressions of the view that applicants have of the Diploma program as a means of achieving other aspirations; for example, those expressed in themes 3, 4, and 6.

(g) Theme 6, which is focussed on language and culture, probably reflects the large number of applicants (about half the total number) seeking places in curriculum studies in English and LOTE.

(h) Themes 6 to 8 are less prominent than the others. The method of analysis sometimes leads to the identification of a fragment of a theme, for example, Theme 7, anticipation of success in the Diploma, is not in itself a motive for seeking admission, but rather acts as a key to several other motives.

Conclusions

Even in these days of reduced professional options, people will continue to seek work which is personally fulfilling, safe, and adequately paid in the eyes of applicants. Few jobs offer these qualities more than teaching. This may account for why teaching is the most popular profession in Australia, and these attractive qualities may allow teacher training institutions to recruit the very best candidates more than ever before.

There is a point beyond which efficiency and effectiveness in the selection process become antithetical to the qualities sought in future teachers. Impersonal criteria such as grade averages, and appropriate academic study can be used dispassionately, but once these are met, the subsequent choices become more difficult. Using a selection procedure based on essays such as those used in this research has the potential to assist with the "first sort" of the applicants. That is, it can be used to help determine more about the applicant than academic background and language proficiency. An immediate qualification must be attached to the use of essays to select teacher candidates. It is that the essays may only be useful as part of an ensemble of devices. For example, the essays may locate completely unacceptable attitudes among some applicants regarding discipline in the classroom. The essay has value in this instance because it allows those who make the selections to be made aware of a potential problem. An interview with the candidate may be the most appropriate next step to take.

Locating potential problems is a negative justification for the use of essays in the screening of preservice teacher trainees. There are at least two quite positive justifications for the use of such a

procedure as requiring an essay as part of an application.

The first justification has to do with identifying the aspirations of the candidates. In the case of the sample used in this study, the themes which were motivated their choice to be teachers are known to some of those who actually frame the course they will study. It is always useful when constructing a curriculum for a teacher education course to know what it is that has brought the students there in the first place.

The second justification is quite complementary to the first, but the emphasis is on what the teacher educators want in concert with the wants of the candidates. Stated more succinctly, the use of essays as part of the selection process would allow those associated with teacher education the opportunity to try to match their preferred motives among potential teachers with those actually expressed by the applicants.

The case for the use of essays in both selection procedures and teacher education curriculum deserves more consideration. They cannot be allowed too great a role, but their utility should not be ignored either. Clearly, this is an instance where more research is warranted.

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