



# The Perceptions of the Pre-service Education Students about the Status and Socio-cultural Beliefs about the Teaching Profession

Petronila Ndungwa Mwangi  
University of Eastern Africa, Baraton, Kenya  
Email: [mwangip@ueab.ac.ke](mailto:mwangip@ueab.ac.ke)

**Abstract:** *The study sought to explore the perception of pre-service education students on the status and socio-cultural beliefs about the teaching profession in selected public and private universities in Kenya. Correlational research design and a concurrent mixed method approach was employed in this study. The respondents in this study were third and fourth year pre-service education students. from six selected public and private chartered universities in Kenya which had been in existence for the last twenty years and offering teacher education. Purposive, cluster and convenience sampling methods were used. Data were gathered by the use of questionnaires and interviews. In data analysis, frequencies, means, standard deviation, linear regression and Pearson product moment correlation coefficient were used. The pre-service education students were found to have a low perception of the status of the teaching profession and believed that teaching is a hard work which is emotionally draining, although they perceived teaching to be a profession that requires high levels of expert knowledge.*

**Keywords:** Perception, Preservice, Socio cultural, Teaching, Students, Status

## How to cite this work (APA):

Mwangi, P. N. (2024). The perceptions of the pre-service education students about the status and socio-cultural beliefs about the teaching profession. *Journal of Research Innovation and Implications in Education*, 8(1), 288 – 298. <https://doi.org/10.59765/hrvc7524>.

## 1. Introduction

Pre-service education plays a pivotal role in shaping the perspectives and attitudes of future educators towards the teaching profession. Understanding how aspiring teachers perceive the status of the teaching profession is crucial for educational institutions as well as policy makers. This is because educational policies have an impact on how the teaching profession is perceived. Understanding how these policies shape pre-service education student's perception can inform discussions on the attractiveness and sustainability of a career in teaching. Majority of students pursuing a bachelor of education degree have a negative attitude towards the teaching profession (Uzoeshi,2024).

Teaching does not seem to enjoy the enviable status nor attract favorable attention from society as it did in the past years (Audu & Egharevba, 2016). In this same study it was found out that most students are not willing to join the teaching profession because of its low status. Parents too have a negative perception and attitude towards teaching as a profession and they would rather their children join other profession which seem to be prestigious as compared the teaching. Some of the factors mentioned in the same study to have contributed to the negative perception include; poor working conditions, high rate of indiscipline among students, teachers not being appreciated or encouraged in the society. So generally the teaching profession does not seem to enjoy the enviable status and prestige it used to enjoy in the past years and studies have confirmed that teaching is regarded as an employment of the last resort, (Decota,2005)

However, this is not to say that the status of the teaching profession is a one size fits all. There are those who have a different view when it comes to teaching as a profession. Countries like Armenia, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland Luxembourg and Spain still enjoy high status of the teaching profession and many young people in such countries are attracted to teaching as a career, (Decota,2005).

Career choice is a very important decision to be made in life among many other important decisions the youth face in their transition years of high school and the world of work (Hurley & Thorp, 2002). It even becomes difficult when the amount of information they have about education and the available options is insufficient (Stead, Els & Fouad, 2004). The choice of a career needs to be accompanied or motivated by the commitment to serve in the profession. Socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, and sexual orientation seem to affect career decision making since these factors usually limit job opportunities by way of discrimination, reduced access to resources, fewer occupational role models and they tend to also limit the expansions of possible career options (Luzzo, McWhirter & Hawley, 2001).

Career guidance and counseling seem not to be adequate and readily available to many students and as such they get help from their parents which does not go a long way because the parents do not seem to have a wide frame of reference when it comes to career development and job opportunities in relation to their sons or daughters' abilities. Some parents want their children to pursue careers which they were interested in but for some reason they were not able to fulfill their dreams which they now want fulfilled through their children. This seems to affect the individual's commitment to the selected career (Hurley & Thorp, 2002). Lack or inadequate career guidance in schools has led to high school students graduating when they are not sure of what career path they want to pursue or have made poorly informed decisions which they may later regret or abandon altogether, as Hurley and Thorp (2002) continue to argue.

Vocational and behavioural psychologists have long considered the factors that influence people when choosing a particular career; what motivates an individual to make a career choice is complex and perhaps not always a completely rational decision. For some individuals, a career relating to people would be impossible, yet for others the reverse is true; or being outdoors may be essential ingredients in the work people seek (Gottfredson, 1981; Holland, 1959). Internationally, there has been a growth on the interest in research in what motivates people to join the teaching profession, and there has been a steady flow of studies from many countries (Watt, Richardson, Klusmann, Kunter, Beyer, Trautwein & Baumert, 2012). Studies on what motivates people to become teachers, dates as early as the 1920s. Some studies which were done then identified the most

significant reasons which motivated individuals to join the teaching profession (Daniel & Ferrell, 1991). The 1980s however brought a renewed focus on predictions of teacher shortages and in turn a renewed interest in career motivations of teachers and their commitment to the profession, (Daniel & Ferrell, 1991). Since then, and especially in the last three decades, motivation of pre-service education students to choose teaching as a career has become a popular topic of study and it may continue to be so as long as there are teacher education graduates who do not enter the profession or drop after a short period of time (Yuce, Sahin, Kocer, & Kana, 2013). In another study by Richardson and Watt (2010) it is reported that countries like Australia, U.S. A, Germany, Norway, U.K and several European countries experience difficulty in recruiting and retaining teachers. Singapore is one country experiencing teacher attrition with the beginning teachers leaving immediately after their graduation and as such the Ministry of Education in Singapore launched what is known as Growth Recognition, Opportunities and Well-being (GROW) package with an aim of attracting and retaining good teachers, (Ministry of Education Singapore, 2006). The Ministry also came up with another incentive to encourage teachers not to leave for other professions, those with 12 years of teaching experience can take a full-term sabbatical at full pay and professional development is subsidized.

Many young people today do not want to pursue teaching as a career, and among those who do, a good number leave the profession within the first five years; a sign that they are not committed to the profession, (Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). As such there is a growing body of research to establish factors affecting the choices people make to pursue teaching as a career and how those who choose the profession are committed to the service. Worldwide, the issue is gaining importance because it is becoming increasingly difficult to attract and retain the young people in the teaching profession as well as keep the trained force committed to the profession (Topkaya & Uztosun, 2012). Promising pre-service education students with characteristics that would make effective teachers, meaning teachers who are caring, enthusiastic, competent and committed are often sought after by other professions, which would also benefit from such characteristics. There is no doubt that the teaching profession competes against other important professions for the most talented people and qualified teachers seem to secure employment outside of the classroom at very competitive salaries (Miller & Miller as cited in Harms & Knobloch, 2005).

The same view of how important career choice is, seems to be upheld by BeduAddo as cited in Bossman, (2014), Plessman, (1985) when he expressed that indeed career choice is as important as choosing a life partner since it is also a lifetime process. Just like becoming miserable when the wrong marriage partner is chosen, one can also become very unhappy if one's career is not well planned

(Bossman, 2014, p 40). Unfortunately, many students lack career guidance and this makes it difficult to make informed choices because they lack adequate information. In past studies students have indicated lack of career guidance and counseling in schools and majority have indicated that their parents are the only ones who help in career guidance. A study by Maree (2009) found that many learners passed grade 12 without having received career counseling in any form and as a result they were denied the opportunity to apply for sought out fields of study in universities and colleges. As observed by Maree and Beck (2004), counseling programs were being underutilized because they were viewed as very costly. In another study Bojuwoye and Mbanjwa (2006) found that career counseling services were unsatisfactory and students lacked career information. Kenya is not any better when it comes to career guidance and counseling in schools. The issue with the counselors in Kenyan schools is that some career counselors are full time teachers who are either overloaded or not quite clear of what is expected of them. It is also evident that number of career masters in schools is very small. A study by Mugambi (2013), showed that there was an insufficient number of career counselors in Meru North District, inadequate counseling facilities and majority of teacher counselors were not trained in guidance and counseling. Another study by Gitonga (2013), indicated that 87% of teachers were found insufficiently prepared to run career guidance programs in schools. These findings seem to concur with earlier findings by Kithyo and Petrina (2002) that guidance counselors or career masters in Kenya did not have the time or facilities to provide any career or psychological guidance to students and that, the lack of time could be attributed to the fact that the career masters are teachers with a full teaching load. They further articulated that many students in secondary schools in Kenya had no knowledge beyond what they might have heard other people talk about. One of the respondents clearly declared that they did not have career and guidance in secondary school and that he was not guided. Another respondent in the study also confirmed this by articulating that they did not have career guidance in their school, they were given career booklets to read (Kithyo & Petrina, 2002).

To justify the student's statements Ojenge and Muchemi (n. d.) confirmed with officers from the Ministry of Education (Kenya) through an interview that career guidance teachers simply give students the career booklets with university courses, their prerequisites subjects and cut-off points, instead of guiding and counseling them. It was also pointed out in the same study that about ninety percent of students in public schools in Kenya are not provided any reasonable career guidance. On the same note, Muola and Mwanja (2013), contend that academic advising tends to rank among the lowest areas of higher education satisfaction for college students. There is poor morale in the teaching profession in Kenya and the service is characterized by poor levels

of commitment and high turnover (Kamwilu, 2011). This can be supported by a report from the Kenya Secondary School Heads' Association (KSSHA) which stated that a record of six hundred teachers left the classroom between March and June 2008 for lucrative jobs at a time when fifteen thousand teachers were needed (Agutu, 2010). A study by Kasau (2014) in Mbooni East District, established that one hundred and two teachers left teaching in the district between 2007 and 2012. The researcher also pointed out that the National statistics indicate that ten thousand teachers are lost annually due to various reasons ranging from resignations, assignment of non-teaching jobs in other ministries and others quit to join the private sector. Others left after undertaking further studies and either took up non-teaching jobs at the ministry of education as quality assurance standards officers where remunerations are more lucrative than what TSC offers or to teach in tertiary institutions (Oyaro, 2008; Kasau, 2014). A survey by Kamwilu, (2011) noted that seventy-five teachers and seventy head teachers strongly agreed that they would not teach anymore if there was a better paying job. The study sought to establish the perceptions of pre-service education about the status and social cultural beliefs about the teaching profession.

The following research question was answered in this study to address the above stated problem. What are the perceptions of the pre-service education students about the status and socio-cultural beliefs about the teaching profession?

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Status of the Teaching Profession**

The teaching profession does not seem to enjoy the enviable status and prestige it used to in the past. This seems to be a situation cutting through many nations of the world. For example, the decline of the status of teachers in society is a problem throughout Europe. In most European countries, the teaching profession has lost much of its attraction for the best candidates because of a decline in prestige, poor working conditions and relatively low salaries (Duchemin, & Pavlovaite, 2013). It is a general perception of stakeholders and teachers in many countries that the teaching profession no longer commands the high status it enjoyed 30 years ago and that teachers, especially primary school teachers, are now 'undervalued by society'. Studies confirm that teaching is very much regarded as 'employment of last resort' by most school leavers and university graduates (Devkota, 2005).

In Nepal, "teachers are expected to play key roles in the community and act as role models and yet most teachers feel devalued and not respected by society. The

involvement of teachers in politics also fuels the public's declining perception of teachers". However, some countries like Armenia, Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg and Spain still enjoy high status of the teaching profession, as such young people are attracted to the profession, unlike in other countries where young people would rather opt for other careers than to join the teaching profession, the author continues to argue (Devkota, 2005, p. 23).

As mentioned earlier, the low status of the teaching profession is not a unique situation in Europe, it is being experienced in Africa too. In Tanzania, for example, teachers and the teaching profession have a low status than it did during the colonial days and during the first years of independence (Anangisye, 2009). The low status of teachers and the teaching profession is accounted for by the living conditions of teachers. The living standards are usually measured in terms of remuneration or the pay and any other gains which in turn affect the social life. Most students admitted to teacher training institutions in Africa and in particular Tanzania are not interested in teaching as a career. It has also been pointed out that teachers in Tanzania have not been regarded with equal status of the lawyers, doctors or architects and engineers, (Mhando, 2006).

One of the reasons given as to why the teaching profession is held in low status by the society is because a majority of the candidates admitted into teacher education programmes in Africa, Tanzania in particular, are not genuinely interested in teaching as a career. Teaching career is also seen as the last refuge to many students seeking employment opportunities (Anangisye, 2009, Bennel & Mukyanuzi, 2005, Mhando, 2006 & Sangoleye, 2011). They take up teaching after failing to secure training opportunities in other careers; because of this view: it is a common practice for teacher education colleges and universities in Africa to absorb academically weak students. As such, these teacher trainees do not regard teaching as their chosen profession. They regard themselves as being in a wrong profession, as they most craved to become doctors, engineers or lawyers, but their poor academic grades left them with no choice except to become teachers (Anangisye, 2009). A study on the living and working conditions of teachers in Tanzania revealed that majority of teachers in Tanzania, both in primary and secondary schools are teachers by choice (Sumra, 2005). However, the education system in Tanzania has absorbed uninterested pre-service teachers to teacher training colleges, which tend to have a negative impact on the education system because such teachers are neither enthusiastic nor committed to their service. (Anangisye, 2009).

Teachers pointed out that another factor which has contributed to the low status of the profession and lack of respect is being forced to live in poor conditions. Shoddy housing accommodations has reduced their

status, which in turn has lessened the respect that they were given in their communities. The study states that teachers' status has seriously declined since Tanzania's independence in 1961, when its first President Julius Nyerere used the Kiswahili word *Mwalimu* (teacher) as his title. The situation is likened by one of the teachers in the study as minding the car and paying no attention to the driver, "If you fill a car with petrol, but forget the driver, what will happen?" (Davidson, 2006, p. 6).

The teaching profession was held in high regard in Kenya as a noble profession during the 1970's and 1980's (Taaliu, 2010). However, during the 1990's things started to change, especially with the introduction of the market economy, when careers were valued in terms of money and vocations were being used as a spring board to earn the good money and accumulate wealth. The teaching profession began to lose its prestige because of its low remunerations compared to other professions. This had not been the case during the pre-colonial times and immediately after independence, for teachers were highly regarded and respected (Taaliu, 2010). During the colonial times and the years following independence teachers were respected and given the title "*Mwalimu*". Later as the status of the teaching profession became watered down by poor living conditions and very low remunerations, as compared to other professions, the title changed to "*Ka- mwalimu*", especially for primary school teachers who earned very low salaries. Teachers could not afford decent clothes and living and some resorted to drinking *chang'aa* and other local brews because they could not afford the standard but more expensive beer (Taaliu, 2010).

In Kenya, "only a minority of teachers have a long term commitment to their profession... Teachers no longer enjoy high occupational status, particularly because the pay of primary and secondary public teachers is very low" (Hyde, Muito & Muito, 2005, p. 22). According to Achoka, Poipoi and Sirima (2011) the morale of the teaching profession has for many years been an area of concern. The authors of the article continue to cite perennial perceptions of the teaching profession as low status, low pay, growing class sizes, changes in education system and lack of professional autonomy.

The teaching profession seems to be the only profession where untrained people practice, unlike other professions like medicine, engineering, architect, accounting and many others, a thing which seems to have lowered the status of the profession. The shortening of pre-service training in many African countries to just one year in college followed by one year of supervised on the job training to curb teacher shortage has also lowered the overall standing of teaching in relation to other professions (Hyde, Muito & Muito, 2005).

As argued by Mugambi and Ochieng (2014), the teaching profession in Kenya falls short of a true profession due to the following:

1. Poor status compared to that of doctors, and lawyers. All due to the low remunerations, poor working and service conditions as well as poor career prospects.
2. Recruiting people with low qualifications and inadequate resources in the training institution.
3. The new developments and delays in teacher recruitment by Teachers Service Commission (TSC) has required teachers to teach subjects they did not train for.
4. ...“teaching has become a dumping ground for those who cannot make it elsewhere those who use it as a stepping stone to better occupation...can afford time to do other things” (p.5).
5. Teachers are fragmented by qualifications and area of specialization.
6. “Bureaucratic controls” for example there is a lot of scrutiny from without especially when it comes to performance in the National Examinations.
7. Teachers are not in control of what they do.
8. There is no uniformity in the admission qualification of teachers to teacher training institutions.
9. Kenya does not have a professional body for teachers (Mugambi & Ochieng, 2012, p.4).

## 2.2 Socio-cultural Beliefs

Cultural beliefs differ from one community to another. However, there is a general belief that teaching is more suitable to females than men. This can be evidenced by the gender disparity in the teaching profession and the candidates who apply for various teacher education programmes (Keow, 2005). In many countries teaching is predominantly occupied by women, especially at lower levels. Teaching is one of the traditional occupations which attract many women because women are believed to possess certain personality traits which go so well with the profession (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007). Teaching is also viewed as a rural based vocation with poor working and living conditions and as such associated with low prestige.

Teaching as a profession is believed to attract people of low academic ability and as such associated with mediocrity and less prestige. Although teaching as a career is seen to attract people who do not have high academic ability there are some qualities which have been associated with good teachers, like people who are persistent, emotionally mature, those who defer self-gratification, are tolerant, empathetic, humble, and have positive self-concept (Kibera & Kimokoti, 2007).

## 2.3 Spiritual and Religious Factors

“Spirituality is inescapable as an entity in our culture and thus could be factored as a possible influence on decision

making and career choices” (Tillich, as cited in Bigham, 2008 p.12). Religious and spiritual commitments are critical when it comes to career choice especially to individuals with intrinsic religious orientation who have a belief in a Divine will for their lives. Such people believe that they are called to a certain specific profession. Teachers support this belief with the bible text from the New Testament which say that, “And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets some evangelists, and some teachers” (Ephesians 4: 11). It is viewed that career decision making is a process of trying to discern Gods will (Duffy & Dik, 2009).

According to Dewey as cited in Bigham (2008) teachers need to realize the dignity of their work, teachers work is more than a job it is a calling; the teacher is a social servant set apart to maintain proper social order and the security of the right kind of social growth. Dewey went a step further to point out that the teacher is seen as a prophet of the Almighty God. Teaching is one of the lowly paid professions a factor that qualify it as a calling because careers which are entered into not necessarily for monetary gains are viewed as a calling. A career is considered a calling when the workers feel a strong sense of commitment and passion (Weber, 2004). Many people perceive teaching to be demanding but those called to it acknowledge there is a lot of self-sacrifice. Reason being that all what teachers do is mostly geared to helping others other than self. Although there seem to be divided voices in the definition of career calling, there is a consensus that individuals who view their work as a calling seem to have a stronger sense of meaning, purpose and fulfillment as they desire to contribute to the development of society by serving others. Their satisfaction and fulfillment is from the work itself not the extrinsic rewards (Duffy & Dik, 2009).

**Life circumstances.** Life circumstances, in this study, is used to mean all the uncontrollable situations, events and conditions that occur at an individual or societal level that may constrain career decision making as pointed out by Duffy and Dik (2009). These circumstances are not always negative; in fact, sometimes they are positive and bring forth fruitful career outcomes. Although it should also be understood that sometimes uncertain life circumstances may have both positive and negative effects on an individual’s career development from onset to retirement. One of the respondents in Gordon’s study stated that they joined teaching as a profession because the family could not afford the medical school that he wanted to join (Gordon, 1993).

External factors strongly influence individuals as they make their career choices (Gordon, 1993; Duffy & Dik, 2009). Many individuals pointed out that they were influenced by either their friends or their friends’ parents. For example, one of the respondents declared that he was orphaned at a very early age and as a result of lack of parental guidance. He did not know what career to pursue but his friends’ parents who were teachers guided

him and encouraged him to become a teacher (Gordon, 1993).

Those who were influenced by their teachers either got a positive or negative influence. Those who were positively influenced by teachers pointed out that they had a special teacher who inspired them to become teachers, while on the other hand those who were negatively influenced by teachers stated that they had teachers who neglected the students or their duties, were racist or discouraged the students in their teaching process. One respondent said her teachers were not caring and she never got help from them when she needed it, so she wants to become a teacher to help students who find themselves in her situation, but more than a half of the teachers were inspired by one of their favorite teachers (Stichert, 2005).

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

Research design is a detailed plan on how research was conducted or the procedures for collecting, analyzing, interpreting and reporting data (Creswell, 2008). This study employed a Correlational research design and a concurrent mixed methods approach. In a concurrent mixed method, the research uses both quantitative and qualitative approaches without prioritizing one over the other for a comprehensive analysis of the research problem. Concurrent mixed method was used in this study because it is an efficient design in that, data is collected at the same time and the exercise takes less time compared to other mixed method designs. Mixed method was also used because many of the studies conducted on the factors influencing individuals to join the teaching profession have been mainly quantitative. A study by Gore, Smith, Holmes and Fray (2015) investigating the factors that influence the choice of teaching as a first career between 2005 and 2015 found that 40 studies had used quantitative approach while 18 had used qualitative approach and only 17 had used mixed methods. The quantitative data was collected using a researcher developed questionnaire which adapted some statements from the FIT- choice scale, while qualitative data was collected by use of interviews to source for in-depth information from the pre- service education students, especially those who had passed so well and could have qualified for any career but they chose teaching as a career. The researcher used the concurrent mixed method design because the use of this type of mixed methods strengthens and counteracts the weaknesses of one method. In addition to making up for the weaknesses of one method, mixed methods usually provide a more complete and comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2008). The results from the studies which used quantitative methods have not shown much emphasis on deeper expressions and motivational orientations of respondents and how these motivations

relate to their commitment to the profession, something this study intended to pursue.

#### **3.2 Population and Sampling Technique**

The population of the study comprised of pre-service education students from selected chartered universities in Kenya. Six public and private universities which had been in existence for at least twenty years and had been offering teacher education were selected in this study. The choice of both public and private universities was because teachers graduating from both public and private universities seem not to be committed to teaching as their career choice. By the year 2013 there were three fully chartered public universities and three fully chartered private universities in Kenya which were offering teacher education and had been in existence for twenty years. Third and fourth year pre-service education students were purposively sampled with the assumption that if they had not changed their minds during their first and second years of training, they were interested and committed to the teaching profession. This assumption was, however, found not to be true because some third and fourth year students clearly indicated that they were not committed to the teaching profession but some unavoidable circumstances kept them in the training. Purposive, cluster and convenience sampling were employed in this study because it can be used in both quantitative and qualitative research. The purposive sampling was used to select the six universities in Kenya offering teacher education by the time of the study and which had been in existence and also had offered teacher training for at least twenty years. Cluster sampling was used to select the third and fourth year pre-service education students in teacher education who were sampled because of their experience and level of training. The sample was taken from the third and fourth year education students who were currently registered for semester beginning August to December 2016. Because of the large number of students in the public universities, not all the third and fourth year education students were registered for that semester. Convenience sampling was used to select those who participated in the interview. In some universities, it was either both third and fourth year students doing their second semester or third year students doing their first semester and fourth year students doing their second semester. As a result, not all the third and fourth year students were registered during the period of data collection for this research.

#### **3.3 Research Instruments**

This study used a researcher prepared questionnaire which adapted some statements from the FIT-Choice Scale from Watt & Richardson, (2007). The research also used a structured interview schedule which the researcher developed to collect qualitative data on the perception factors which led to the choice of teaching as

a career and the desire to remain committed to the teaching profession.

### 3.3.1 Validity of the Instruments

To establish validity in this study, content and construct validity of the questionnaire was established by proper conceptualization and operationalization through review of literature. The questions on the interview schedule were also subjected to expert validation by the supervisors of the study and faculty in the school of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences University of Eastern Africa, Baraton.

### 3.3.2 Reliability of the Instruments

The reliability in this study was calculated using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 20 and the following was established; commitment to the teaching profession .790, status of the teaching profession .726, socio-cultural beliefs about the teaching profession .621, choosing teaching as a fallback .636, external influence to the choice of teaching as a career .743, self-concept as a motivation to choose teaching as a career .769, altruistic reasons as motivating factors to choose a career in teaching .776, extrinsic factors as a motivation to join teaching .868 and intrinsic motivation.754. The instrument was thus found to be reliable to collect data for the study.

## 3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Following the research proposal approval, the researcher, through the Director of Graduate Studies proceeded to seek clearance from the University of Eastern Africa, Baraton Research and Ethics committee. After the approval from the ethics committee, the researcher further sought an introductory letter from the Director of Graduate Studies and Research to facilitate the application to the National Commission for Science, Technology, and innovation (NACOSTI) for a research permit. On receiving the research permit from NACOSTI the researcher reported to the county commissioner Nairobi County and the County Director of Education of Nairobi County. The researcher further sought an introductory letter from the Director of Graduate Studies and Research University of Eastern Africa, Baraton to the selected universities which participated in the study. With the introductory letter and the research permit, the researcher personally visited the sampled universities and sought permission to collect data. After presenting her request to the Deputy Vice Chancellors in charge of research from the selected universities, the researcher waited for communication because in these universities there were bodies to approve such requests. After some time, the researcher received communication from the selected universities either through phone calls alerting her to go and collect the letters of authorization or others were directly sent to

her through the email. Subsequent to receiving the permission, the researcher personally visited these universities and introduced herself to the deans of schools/faculty of education who later sent her to the chairpersons of departments. At the department level the researcher once more introduced herself and clarified the purpose of the study. She also tried to establish the number of third and fourth year students pursuing teaching as a career who had registered during that period (August to December 2016), for they were the respondents in this study. The researcher also tried to find out when the students were available and how she could get to them.

At this time the head of departments introduced some of the lecturers who were teaching the third and fourth year education students. It was then agreed upon with the lecturers and the researcher when she could avail herself to collect the data. On the specified dates and time the researcher went to the different universities where she accompanied the lecturers to class. Some of the lecturers gave her the first part of the lesson, while other lecturers preferred teaching first and then giving the researcher the last part of their lecture time. Whatever the case, the researcher used that time to introduce herself to the students, clarified to them the purpose of the study and the kind of information which was required from them, and sought for their informed consent. The respondents were assured that the information gathered would be used solely for the purpose of this study and further assured that confidentiality will be observed when handling the gathered information. The researcher then distributed the questionnaires with the help of some lecturers and class representatives. The respondents were informed not to write their names on the questionnaire and to be as honest as possible in giving their answers and also to complete the questionnaire without leaving any blanks or an unanswered question. The researcher then collected the filled questionnaires and thanked both the lecturer and the students for their time and information. The researcher was present when the questionnaires were being filled to answer any questions or give any needed clarification. The return rate of the questionnaires was good 1001 (87.96%) out of the 1138 which were distributed.

## 3.5 Data Analysis

The data collected for this study was subjected to descriptive statistics.

# 4. Results and Discussion

## Perceptions About the Teaching Profession

This study aimed at addressing the research question, *“What are the perceptions of pre-service education*

students about the status and socio-cultural beliefs of the teaching profession?" The table shows the respondents perception of the status of the teaching profession. To rate the status of the teaching profession, the respondents were presented with four items rated on a four-point scale as follows; Disagree = 1.00-1.49, Tend to Disagree =

1.50-2.49, Tend to Agree = 2.50-3.49 and 3.50-4.00 = Agree.

The data reveals that pre-service education students have a low perception of the status of the teaching profession ( $x=2.34$ ;  $SD=.895$ ).

**Table 1: Status of the Teaching Profession**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Teachers are perceived as professionals	2.88	1.19
Teaching is perceived as a high-status occupation	1.89	1.08
Teaching is a well-respected career	2.21	1.18
Teachers feel their occupation has high social status	2.38	1.19
Status of the teaching profession	2.34	.89

Note: Mean categories: *Disagree* = 1.00-1.49, *Tend to Disagree* = 1.50-2.49, *Tend to Agree* = 2.50-3.49 and 3.50-4.00 = *Agree*

Following is the respondents rating of each of the statements on the status of the teaching profession, the statement “teaching profession is perceived as a high status occupation” the respondents rating was ( $x=1.89$ ;  $SD= 1.07$ ). This clearly indicates that teaching is not perceived as a high status occupation. Another statement stated “teaching is a well-respected career” ( $x=2.21$ ;  $SD= 1.18$ ), again this was a below average rating, the pre-service education students were disagreeing that teaching is a well-respected career. On the statement “teachers feel their occupation has a high social status” rating was ( $x=2.38$ ;  $SD= 1.19$ ), another below average rating on the status of the teaching profession. The last statement on the status of the teaching profession, read, “Teachers are perceived as professionals” was rated ( $x=2.88$ ;  $SD= 1.19$ ), an average rating. All the statements on the status of the teaching profession had a big standard deviation to indicate that, teaching profession is perceived differently by people from different communities. There are those communities which respect and value the teaching profession while others do not. The findings of this study seem to agree with Mugambi and Ochieng, (2014), when they point out that there is “the aspect of pseudocredentiaism in the general assumption that those who know some content can automatically teach e.g. the

idea of untrained teachers which strongly suggest that teaching does not require any special talents and training” (p.4).

Sang (2013) further points out that there has been a debate on whether teaching is a profession or not. She articulates that some people believe that teaching is a profession which requires rigorous training and preparation while others have the opinion that teaching is more of a craft than a profession and hold that people can learn on the job. As cited earlier, it is a general perception of stakeholders and teachers in many countries that the teaching profession no longer commands the high status it enjoyed 30 years ago and that teachers, especially primary school teachers, are now ‘undervalued by society’. Studies confirm that teaching is very much regarded as ‘employment of last resort’ by most school leavers and university graduates (Devkota, 2005).

In agreement, Taaliu (2010) argues that teaching profession was held in high regard in Kenya as a noble profession during the 1970’s and 1980’s. However, during the 1990’s things started to change, especially with the introduction of the market economy, when



careers were valued in terms of money and vocations were being used as a spring board to earn the good money and accumulate wealth. The teaching profession began to lose its prestige because of its low remunerations compared to other professions (Taaliu, 2010).

### Socio-cultural Beliefs

The respondents also rated the socio-cultural beliefs on the teaching profession. The pre-service education students were presented with four items on the socio-cultural beliefs. The items were rated on a four-point scale as follows, Disagree = 1.00- 1.49, Tend to Disagree = 1.50- 2.49, Tend to Agree = 2.50- 3.49 and Agree = 3.50- 4.00.

The findings from the study as shown in the table tell that the socio-cultural beliefs about teaching are that teaching is a hard work and also emotionally demanding. There was also a tendency to believe that teachers feel valued by the society. There seemed to be certainty that teaching requires high levels of expert knowledge. Following is the respondents rating of the statements on socio-cultural beliefs; “teaching is emotionally demanding” ( $x=3.32$ ;  $SD= 1.02$ ), “teachers feel valued by society” ( $x=2.72$ ;  $SD= 1.18$ ), “teaching requires high levels of expert knowledge” ( $x =3.49$ ;  $SD= .88$ ), “teaching is hard work” ( $x =3.15$ ;  $SD= 1.14$ ). The overall mean of the socio-cultural beliefs was ( $x =2.43$ ;  $SD= .54$ ). The standard deviation on the socio-cultural beliefs is small to imply that the respondents agreed that, although teaching is a hard job which is emotionally demanding, teachers are valued by the society.

**Table 2: Socio-cultural Beliefs**

	Mean	Std. Deviation
*Teaching is emotionally demanding	3.32	1.02
Teachers feel valued by society	2.72	1.18
Teaching requires high levels of expert knowledge	3.49	.89
*Teaching is hard work	3.15	1.14
Socio-cultural Beliefs	2.44	.55

Note: Mean categories: *Disagree* = 1.00-1.49, *Tend to Disagree* = 1.50-2.49, *Tend to Agree* = 2.50-3.49 and 3.50-4.00 = *Agree*

The findings of this study agree with other studies that teaching as a profession has earned negative images including the low status of teachers which discourage young students from choosing it as a career, (Gao & Trent; Lai et al.; as cited in Gore, Smith, Holmes & Fray, 2015). Cultural beliefs have been found to influence students to or not to choose teaching as a career. This is supported by a study with African America males in the US which demonstrated that students did not choose teaching as a career because they held negative perceptions of teachers and teaching. These African Americans did not go for teaching because they viewed schools as oppressive institutions where African American males were stigmatized, labeled and devalued. They also saw teaching as “selling out”, as it is believed

that the curriculum represents black people inaccurately and unfairly, (Gore, et al, 2015).

## 5. Conclusion and Recommendations

### 5.1 Conclusion

The pre-service education students were found to have a low perception of the status of the teaching profession. They indicated that the teaching profession is not perceived as one of the high status occupations in society. Although they tended to agree that teachers are perceived as professionals. On the sociocultural beliefs, the pre-service teachers articulated that different communities have different beliefs when it comes to the

teaching profession. Some communities believe that teaching is a hard work and is emotionally demanding. It was also revealed that some communities respect and appreciate the teaching profession and believe that it is a profession that requires high levels of expert knowledge.

## 5.2 Recommendations

1. The cut off points for those being placed to train as teachers should be increased to compare the teaching profession with other professions like medicine or engineering, which seem to enjoy the cream of the society. This may improve how the society perceives the teaching profession.
2. The government should strive to improve the working conditions of teachers so that teaching compares favorably with other professions.
3. Students who join universities to train as teachers and realize that they are fitted or comfortable to train as teachers, should be given an opportunity to change a career they so passionate about.

## References

- Agutu, M. (2010, June 23). Teacher Shortage Declared a Crisis: *The Daily Nation*, p.9
- Anangisye, WAL (2009). The Current Status of Teachers and the Teaching Profession in Tanzania, *A journal of Contemporary Research*, 6(1) Abstract.
- Bennell, P. & Mukyanuzi, F. (2005). Is there any teacher motivation crisis in Tanzania? Unpublished manuscript.
- Bigham, J. T. (2008). *Role of Spirituality in Persons Choosing a Career in Education: Calling as a motivating Factor*. (PhD dissertation) Liberty University.
- Blustein, D. L. (2008). The role of work in psychological health and well-being: A conceptual, Historical, and public policy perspective. *American Psychologist*, 63, 228-240 [http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003\\_066X.63.4.228](http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0003_066X.63.4.228)
- Bojuwoye, O., & Mbanjwa, S. (2006). Factors Impacting on Career Choices of Technik on Students from Previously Disadvantaged High Schools. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, 1, 3-16.
- Bossman, F. I. (2014). Educational Factors that Influence the Career Choices of University of Cape Coast Students. *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences*, 4(2) 40-49.
- Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational Research Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Pearson International Edition.
- Daniel, L. G. & Ferrell, C. M. (1991). Clarifying Reasons Why People Aspire to Teach: An Application of Q-methodology. *Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid- South Educational Research Association*, Lexington, KY.
- Davidson, E. (2006). The Pivotal role of Teacher Motivation in Tanzania: *Working Paper 7*.
- Devkota, B. (2005) *Is There a Teacher Motivation Crisis in Nepal?* Kathmandu.
- Duchemin, C. & Pavlovaite, I. (2013). Analysis of an Online Survey of Social Partners in Education. *Report Prepared on Behalf of ETUCE by ICF with the Support of the European Commission*.
- Duffy R. D. & Dik, B. J. (2009). *Beyond the Self: External Influence in the Career Development Process*.
- Gitonga, F. N. (2013). *Decisiveness in career choices among secondary school students in Kiambu west district-Kiambu County, Kenya*.
- Gordon, J. A. (1993). *Why Did You Select Teaching as a Career? Teachers of Color Tell Their Stories*.
- Gore, J., Holmes, K., Smith, M. & Fray, L. (2015). Investigating the Factors that Influence the Choice of Teaching as a First career. A Report Commissioned by the Queensland College of Teachers December 2015.
- Harms, B. M., & Knobloch, N. A. (2005). Pre-service Teachers' Motivation and Leadership Behaviors Related to Career Choice. *Career and Technical Education Research*, 30(2), 101-124.
- Holland, J. L. (1959). A theory of vocational choice. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 6(1), 35-45. doi: 10.1037/h0040767
- Hyde, K., Muito, M. & Muito, G. (2005). *Teacher Motivation and Incentives in Kenya*, Nairobi. Macmillan.
- Kafu, P. A. (2011). Teacher Education in Kenya Emerging Issues. *International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction*, 1 (1), 43-52 Moi University.
- Kamwilu, D. M. (2011). A Survey of Factors Affecting Turnover of Board of Governors Graduate

- Teachers in Public Secondary Schools in Kikuyu District in Kenya.
- Kasau, O. M. (2014). *Factors Influencing Teacher Attrition at Public Secondary Schools in Mbooni East District, Kenya*.
- Keow, C. L. (2005). *Motives for Choosing the Teaching Profession: Voices of Preservice Teachers*.
- Kibera, L. W. & Kimokoti, A. (2007). *Fundamentals of Sociology of Education with Reference to Africa*. Nairobi: University of Nairobi Press.
- Luzzo, D. A., McWhirter, G., & Hawley, E. (2001). Sex and Ethnic Differences in the Perception of Educational and Career-related Barriers and Levels of Coping Efficacy. *Journal of Counseling & Development, 79*(1), 61-67.
- Maree, J. G. & Beck G. (2004). Using Various Approaches in Career Counseling for Traditionally Disadvantaged (and other) Learners: Some Limitations of a New Frontier. *South African Journal of Education, 24*(1) 80-87.
- Maree, J. G. (2009). Career Counseling in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century South African Institutions of Higher Education at Crossroads. *South African Journal of Higher Education, 23* (3) 4 36 -4 58.
- Mhando, E. (2006). United Republic of Tanzania. A Note on the Teacher Status in Tanzania.
- Ministry of Education Singapore (MOE) (2006). *MOE Unveils \$250M Plan to Boost the Teaching Profession: New "GROW" Package Strengthens Teacher Development and Recognition*.
- Mugambi, B. N. (2013). *Role of Career Guidance and Counseling on Career Awareness Level Secondary School Students in Meru North District-Kenya*.
- Mugambi, M. M. & Ochieng, R.J. (2014). Transforming the Image of the Teaching Profession in Kenya. *International Journal of Education and Research: Vol.2 No.2 February 2014*
- Muola, J. M. & Mwanja, J. M. (2013). Emerging Need for academic Advising in Schools, Colleges and Universities in Kenya. *International Journal of Asian social science, 3*(7):1535-1545 Retrieved from <http://www.aessweb.com/pdf/files/ijass%203%287%29,%201535-1545.pdf>
- Ojenge, W. & Muchemi, L. (n.d). *Career Guidance Using Expert System Approach*. Retrieved from [https://www.uonbi.ac.ke/lmuchemi/files/ojenge\\_winston\\_and\\_muchemi\\_lawrence\\_08.pdf](https://www.uonbi.ac.ke/lmuchemi/files/ojenge_winston_and_muchemi_lawrence_08.pdf)
- Oyaro, K. (2008). *Education- Kenya: Students Pour in Teachers Drain Away: Inter Press Service News Agency*. Retrieved from <http://www.ipsnews.net/2008/06/education-kenya-students-pour-in-teachers-drain-away>.
- Plessman, C. K. (1985). *The Relationship Between Personality Characteristics and Job Satisfaction of Secondary Marketing Education Teachers. (Doctoral dissertation)*, University of Nebraska,
- Sang, M. (2013). Factors Influencing Career Choice Among Students in Selected Private and Public Universities in Western Kenya.
- Sangoleye S.A. (2011). Teacher education in Nigeria: The challenges and way forward. *International Journal of Education, Science and Public Policy for Africa, 1*(1) 31 –37.
- Stichert, E.G. (2005). *Pre-service Teachers Perception of Profession with Metaphorical Images and Reasons of Choosing Teaching as a Profession*. Masters Thesis Middle East Technical University
- Taaliu, S. T. (2010). *Perspectives on the Teaching Profession in Kenya. (Doctoral Dissertation)*. University of Maryland, College Park.
- Topkaya, E. Z. & Uztosun, M. S. (2012). Choosing Teaching as a Career: Motivation of Pre-Service English Teachers in Turkey. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research 3*(1) 126-134.
- Watt, H. M. G., Richardson, P. W. (2008). Motivations, Perceptions and Aspirations Concerning Teaching as a Career for Different Types of Beginning Teachers. *Learning and Instruction 18*(2008) 408-428.
- Watt, H. M. G., Richardson, P. W., Klusmann, U., Kunter, M., Beyer, B., Trautwein, U., & Baumert, J. (2012). Motivations for choosing teaching as a career: An international comparison using the FIT-Choice scale. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*, 791-805.
- Yuce, K., Sahin, E., Kocer, O., & Kana, F. (2013). Motivations for Choosing Teaching as a Career: A perspective of Pre-Service Teachers from a Turkish Context. *Asia Pacific Educ. Rev., 14*, 295-306.