Original Article

What Inspires Student Teachers for their Future Profession? an Empirical Study

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ABSTRACT

This, the second of a trilogy of papers on the subject of the inspiration of student teachers for their future profession, is a report on an empirical investigation about the actual sources of inspiration of student teachers. (In the first paper we theoretically analysed the sources of inspiration of student students, and the third contains the results of a comparative study into the sources of inspiration of student teachers in The Netherlands, Hungary and South Africa.) In this paper, we report that sequential factor analysis revealed that factors such as 'the inspiring lecturer' and 'actual teaching practice' seemed to have exerted the strongest inspirational influence on this particular group of respondents. The analysis shows that they were also inspired by the following factors: family and extended family, religious and life-conceptual influences, theoretical training and their peers. Asked which contexts exerted the strongest influences on them, respondents ranked their family and extended family first, followed by the teacher education institute, their church or religious institution, friends outside of the training context, and their fellow students. Hobbies, part-time and voluntary work as well as sports received a low ranking. These findings have several implications for the design of a teacher education program.

INTRODUCTION

This article is the second in a trilogy of articles, of which the first focuses on general sources of inspiration theory (Authors, 2010), and the third on a comparison of the sources of inspiration of students in three countries (The Netherlands, Hungary and South Africa) (Authors, 2010(b)). In this paper we focus attention on an aspect of the student teacher inspiration conundrum that we envisaged in the first article, namely finding answers to questions about student teachers' sources of inspiration that can only be acquired empirically. The purpose of this paper is to report on the findings of the empirical investigation that we did, and for that we organised the paper as follows. We begin by briefly presenting a conceptual-theoretical framework in which we refer to the general theory about sources of student teacher inspiration that we developed in the first article in the trilogy, and then outline the specific theory that we developed as basis for the empirical work discussed below. This is followed by a statement of the problem and of the aims of the investigation, an outline of the empirical design and method, a presentation and discussion of the findings, and a general conclusion.

CONCEPTUAL-THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The first article in the trilogy deals with general theory regarding sources of inspiration of student teachers. We found that inspiration is not often mentioned in the context of why students wish to enter the teaching profession, what inspires them to persist with their studies and what they consider to be inspirational (driving forces) in the shaping of their professional identity as teacher. Our conceptual analysis also revealed that inspiration embodied emotion (i.e. an awareness of less rational motives) and the notion of being driven, guided, moved or directed in a particular direction.

We found the term 'sources of inspiration' to refer to the fountainhead of inspiration, and also that a definition of a term akin to inspiration, namely 'spirituality', provided us with at least four conceptual tools with which we could examine the problem of student teachers' inspiration for their future profession: pointing a person to a source beyond the human being, the impetus towards reaching a goal, a personal search for meaning as well as a connection with concrete everyday experience. Our structural analysis of inspiration furthermore showed that it featured at least four essentials:

inspiration is a process, it comes from a variety of sources, it occurs under particular circumstances, and it results in action.

Inspiration

In this article, we discuss these four essential features of inspiration in depth for purposes of creating a theoretical basis for the empirical investigation that we shall be reporting on. We observed, firstly, after taking cognisance of the theoretical and empirical work done by Astin and Astin (2010) in connection with the spiritual life of college students in general, that inspiration is a process (refer Thrash & Elliot, 2004) consisting of two elements: being inspired by, and being inspired to. The former refers to sources of inspiration, whereas the latter suggests that being inspired leads to action, behavioural and other changes. In the context of teacher education, the former refers to the fact that future teachers should be inspired for their future profession as teachers (school educators); they have to be placed in constant interaction with sources of inspiration to prepare them for the task of being inspirational role-models for their own students (learners, pupils) one day. Thrash and Elliot (2003) contend that this process of 'being inspired by' consists of three discrete though interwoven elements, namely transcendence, evocation and motivation.

Transcendence has to do with illumination: inspiration enlightens the person about new and better possibilities. The inspired person experiences the enlightenment as something that transcends his or her everyday life and the feeling that s/he is destined for something better than the everyday or mundane concerns (Thrash & Elliot, 2004; Authors, 2008).

Evocation in turn refers to the fact that inspiration is 'evoked and unwilled; one does not feel directly responsible for becoming inspired' (Thrash & Elliot, 2004). Inspiration is therefore difficult to predict; it often comes as a surprise. Interviews with teachers revealed that they experience such unexpected moments and events as highly significant. The unpredictable nature of interactions with students (learners, pupils) forms part and parcel of the 'game' or 'art' of teaching (Highet, 1989, Authors, 2008). Student teachers may experience such surprises already during their practical teaching, when they enter 'a world of meaningful activity' (Hansen, 2001).

'Being inspired by' is also closely related to *motivation* (derived from Lat. 'moveo' – to move). Authors (2008) conceptualizes the motives (i.e. driving forces) of student teachers as 'the longing that one harbours or cultivates in view of what is deemed desirable in the education situation and in view of what is needed in reaching the aims of education'. This longing provides energy for the achievement of goals; it breathes life into pedagogy. Together with Wissink and Zweerman (1989), De Klerk-Luttig (2008) finds this vitalizing aspect to be one of the central aspects of spirituality (a word, just like inspiration, rooted in Lat. 'inspirare').

The notion of a energising and vitalising aspect also resonates with the idea of engagement in the workplace (Salvanova *et al*., 2006; Van Rhenen; 2008). According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), engagement is an affective-cognitive state that can be sustained over a period of time and which is not directed at a particular object, person or behaviour but rather in general at a person's work or vocation. Engagement refers to the fact that a person feeling fit can work for long periods without rest, and can spend large amounts of energy on the work (Salvanova *et al.,* 2006). For instance, a teacher imbued with the ideal of raising the quality of his/her students' results is prepared to spend great effort on his/her students (learners, pupils). Engagement furthermore refers to the teacher's devotion to the task and the extent that it is deemed meaningful. S/he is enthusiastic and proud of the work, finds the work pleasurable and feels that it should be done immediately. Put succinctly, the emotional aspect of inspiration pertains to 'good feelings'.

In brief: to be inspired for the teaching profession means to have the necessary stamina for the process of teacher education, both physically and psychologically; the inspired student teacher will devote more of his or her time and energy to the training process than the uninspired person (2008).

Reference to energising or vitalising, however, appears not to be sufficient for describing the range of meanings of the motivational aspect. As intimated, it makes no sense of speaking of 'being inspired by' if that inspiration leads nowhere (cf. the fourth essential feature of inspiration mentioned above). As far as 'being inspired to' is concerned, Van den Brand, Hermans and Scheren-Rath (2007) contend that inspiration causes an urge or drive that brings new insight into and casts new light on the experienced world. Inspiration can therefore be seen as a process of transformation. The person being inspired changes, not in character but rather in terms of acquiring new plans, motives, values and even ultimate concerns. This transformation is mediated not only by certain circumstances or conditions (see the

third essential feature of inspiration mentioned above) but also by emotions (Frijda, 2007), in turn consisting of three elements. The first is the emotional experience caused by an event; the event appeals to the person and activates his/her attention. (2008) found that an event can form either a hindrance or obstacle, depending on circumstances.) According to Bakker, Demerouti and Euwema (2005), an inspirational – that is, energy-giving – situation can provide flow and enthusiasm for demanding work. A job (for instance, training to become a teacher) can become tedious if there are not enough flow-giving factors in and around the job. Secondly, emotions embody a readiness to act (refer Ben-Zeév, 2009: 69). This element of inspiration determines whether one is likely to strengthen his or her relation with the environment or destroy that relationship. Thirdly, emotions express how a situation is appreciated, in other words whether one entertains positive or negative perceptions and feelings about something that is experienced (one experience can evoke a sense of awe; another a sense of pleasure). The discussion above of the three elements of emotion shows that transformation will occur in the development of student teachers if events prepare them for (in casu) the teaching practice and inculcate positive perceptions with respect to one or other aspect of the teaching profession.

Author's (2008) empirical investigation also confirmed that emotions indeed play an important role in the daily life of a student teacher. S/He can experience pleasurable emotions about the self and the work, but stressors can evoke negative emotions. Ironically, however, negative emotions can also serve as sources of inspiration if they provide new insight and impetus towards action (Bakker, 2009also refer Salvanova, Bakker & Llorens, 2006). Emotions serve as sources of inspiration if they cause a willingness to act or a longing to realise new goals associated with more attractive alternatives (Van den Brand *et al.*, 2007). Emotions can result from practical and apparently indifferent events, but also from events with a transcendental character, for example a religious experience while singing with children. This will occur if the person, in casu the student teacher, has a strong relationship with God or some other 'ultimate concern'. An emotion born from an ultimate concern in a person's life has a paradoxical effect on the self: it narrows down and opens up at the same time. On the one hand, the inspired person may feel or actually be free from a self-directed attitude while on the other, s/he will experience a sense of openness towards reaching a transcendent goal, that is, a goal beyond the current situation (Van den Brand *et al.*, 2007).

The transformation brought about by inspiration not only has a behavioural aspect but also a mental one. The inspired person's mind map will change, and s/he will resultantly interpret reality differently (Van der Walt, 2006), reconstruct his or her life-story (Van den Brand *et al.*, 2007) and develop a new perspective with respect to the self in the world. In rewriting his or her life-story, a person gives meaning to his or her existence (Van den Brand *et al.*, 2007).

Sources of inspiration

Triggers play an important role in the three-pronged approach that we are discussing, namely transcendence, evocation and motivation. Triggers emanate from sources of inspiration, the second structural feature of inspiration mentioned above.

Thrash and Elliot (2003) provide us with another triad, one with which we can attain a grasp of the notion 'sources of inspiration'. According to them, inspiration *from above* should be distinguished from inspiration *from within* and *from without*, and they discuss the connections of each of these with transcendence, evocation and motivation. Inspiration from above refers to influences of a rather supernatural nature (for instance, the artist being inspired to paint). Inspiration in this sense, they say, can be described as 'a motivational state evoked by a revelation (a 'trigger') and directed toward the conversion of transcendent, revealed knowledge into a work of art, a text or some other concrete form' (Thrash & Elliot, 2003).

Inspiration from within refers to intra-psychic sources. According to Thrash and Elliot (2003), theories about the workings of creative processes often originate in the Freudian idea about the relation of the conscious to the unconscious: 'the conscious will dominates processes during preparation and verification, whereas unconscious, unwilled processes are responsible for incubation and for producing illumination'. After reviewing several theories about inspiration, Thrash and Elliot (2003) conclude that motivation from within is a motivational state, triggered by a compelling idea or illumination, and targeted at the actualisation or realisation of that idea.

Inspiration from without refers to environmental sources, such as other people, artists, poets, religious persons, managers, mentors, role models and heroes. Inspiration can be provided by a person or an

object in the external environment; a person can be moved by what is good, beautiful or superior to the self (Thrash & Elliot, 2003). Exposed to these extraneous forces, the person might envision a better future self (as posited by the social comparison theory).

In teacher education, the focus is on touching (affecting) the forming (shaping) of the students. Because students are exposed to a pre-designed curriculum they experience its impact as a source from without. Based on biographical research among teachers, Kelchtermans (1994) distinguishes three categories of such extraneous forces: critical phases, critical incidents and critical persons. Thrash and Elliot do not refer to critical events in their discussion of the intra-psychical processes that students experience, but the Authors (2008) found this to be an important facet of teacher education in terms of criteria such as transcendence, evocation and motivation – as discussed above. *Critical persons* are those persons through which one may potentially be 'touched' (affected), such as family and friends, and *critical events or incidences* refers to experiences in the circles in which the student finds him- or herself during the processes of teacher education. Critical events or incidences not only occur during student teachers' training (in the form of experiences during practical teaching, guiding by mentors and / or during lectures) but also at home, within the family, the peer group and other contexts. *Critical phases* refers to periods in a career during which the obviousness of certain procedures gets questioned. The teacher education period can be seen as a critical phase per definition, because new images of the profession are being developed. After the initial training, the induction period in a career is another such critical phase (Kelchtermans, 1994: 264) since this is the time that images about the vocation are tested, in this case, of being a teacher.

To summarise, the three aspects discerned by Thrash and Elliot (2003), namely transcendence, evocation and motivation, can be expanded by breaking motivation down into three sub-dimensions: energy-giving, direction with respect to behaviour and direction with respect to insight. Since each of these conceptual frameworks pertains to an aspect of the inspiration process, we used them as part of the theoretical basis of the questionnaire (discussed in more detail below). The questionnaire also reflects several of the possible inspirational contexts of young people (Light, 2001; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993; Hermes, Naber & Dieleman, 2007; Bargh & McKenna, 2004; Dolby: 2001: 14; Györgyiné, 2005): family, friends, fellow students and peer group, religion and faith, training (sub-categories: practical teaching, lectures and literature, lecturers, guidance provided) and sundry contexts such as chat boxes on the internet, novels and films.

As teacher educators, we regarded this study about student teachers' sources of inspiration, especially the empirical findings reported in this paper, as of great import since we hoped that it would tell us more about the actual forces that invigorate and drive students to become teachers, and also more about what we should concentrate on in the process of teaching them to become inspirational future teachers. We hoped that the results of the investigation would help us and other teacher educators to reshape teacher education so that it would concentrate on those aspects of students' lives and studies that they themselves see as important, meaningful and inspirational.

EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION
Aim
The aim of the empirical investigation, and therefore also of the conceptual-theoretical study underlying the empirical work, was to determine what the respondents regarded (perceived, understood) as the most prominent sources of inspiration in their lives and studies as student teachers, and the extent to which such sources indeed impacted on their lives.
Research design and method
We used an interpretive-constructivist approach for the construction of the conceptual-theoretical framework above (Onwuegbuzie, Johnson & Collins, 2009, particularly page 121 ff.), and an *ex post facto* research design for the empirical work. The latter entailed a survey with a closed questionnaire.
Sampling
For practical reasons such as economy of scale, proximity, accessibility, availability and geographical spread, we purposely selected three teacher education institutions: one in the Netherlands (Western Europe, developed country), one in Hungary (Eastern Europe, developing country) and one in South Africa (Africa, developing country; mix of first and third world). All the student teachers, from the first through the fourth year, at these three institutions formed the target population (N = approximately 5

000 at the time of the survey). Of this number, n = 2 135 (42.7%) completed the questionnaire in its entirety, and therefore forms the study sample on which we report below.

Research instrument

As indicated above, a self-constructed questionnaire was used to gather the opinions and insights of the respondents. The questionnaire was based on the conceptual-theoretical framework that we developed (as reported in the first article as well as in the conceptual-theoretical framework above), and took the form of a matrix reflecting on the one hand the various aspects of the inspiration process, and on the other the various contexts that might have had inspirational influence on respondents. Depending on the nature of an item, we used either a five-point Likert-type scale (never, seldom/rarely, sometimes, often, always) or a semantic differential scale (totally disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, totally agree). The questionnaire consists of 135 items, divided into 5 (five) categories of sources of inspiration: 1-7 family (life), 8-25 church and faith, 26-39 friends and fellow students, 40-60 activities, 61-100 teacher education as such, 100-108 for rank ordering and attaching weights to certain sources of inspiration, 109-135 for personal information. Items 61-100 about teacher education consists of four subparts: practical teaching, lectures and literature, lecturers, and guidance provided. (Items 109 – 135 pertaining to the personality trait of 'openness' will not be discussed in this paper.) (Copies of the questionnaire can be obtained from the corresponding author.)

Ethical considerations

Permission for the application of the questionnaire was obtained from the ethical committees of the three teacher education institutions. In some instances, ponderous documentation regarding certain undertakings (among others privacy, confidentiality, accuracy) had to be completed. The respondents also had to be assured of confidentiality and anonymity, and that participation would be voluntary.

Trustworthiness considerations

We made use of several complimentary methods to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process. We firstly subjected the theoretical study about the sources of inspiration of student teachers to the scrutiny of all the participating researchers. Secondly, we acquired face validity for the questionnaire by having all the researchers scrutinise each of the items, in the process making sure that each item could be conceptually and theoretically justified. Thirdly, we had the respondents at one of the participating teacher education institutions complete the questionnaire to see whether adjustments would have to be made. Apart from a few semantic changes due to cultural differences, none was required for that institution or the other two. The Cronbach-alpha coefficient for each of the six factors that emerged was 0.83 plus. A Cronbach-alpha of 0.70 is conventionally accepted as indicative of reliability (Maree, 2007.

Data collection

Staff members of the three institutions of teacher education explained the importance of the survey to their students at roughly the same time (Middle of 2010). Students responded on computer or on hard copy (paper version).

Data processing

The data provided by the three institutions were processed by a group of statisticians by means of the SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) programme. They performed a series of exploratory and confirmatory routine factor analyses of the 135 items of the questionnaire (refer Astin & Astin, 2010: 4), and calculated a Cronbach-alpha coefficient with respect to each of the factors that emerged. The sequence of factor analyses was as follows:

A factor analysis was done with all the data provided by items 1-99. This analysis resulted in a solution in which 6 factors explained 45.15% of the variance. New rounds of factor analysis followed in which certain items were excluded, and that resulted in a 7 factor solution (based on 62 items), explaining 59.97% of the variance (see Table 2A).

By means of a box plot these 7 factors were then analysed for skewness and peaks. This revealed that some of the factors had too high a value for the standardised skewness and the standardised peakedness. To remedy this, all the outliers (extreme values) were removed (SPPS distinguishes between outliers (1,5 – 3 IQR distance from the box) and extremes (> 3 IQR from the box)). The removal of these items necessitated a new factor analysis.

Six new factors emerged from the second round of factor analysis. The next step was to place all the respondents that had a missing value in terms of any of these six new factors on non-active. This yielded a balanced data set (study population n=1509) which facilitated a more exact comparison of

the scores that loaded on the respective factors. In this second round, especially the responses of students that had not had practical teaching experience were rendered non-active. The downside of this was that also the nil-responses of those who had not responded to 'religious inspiration'-type items were taken out of the reckoning. However, Table 1 shows that most of the missing values pertained to 'interaction with school students during practical teaching'.

Table 1: Size of sample after elimination of completed questionnaires with missing values and with extreme values

	n	Aggregate mean	Aggregate Std. Deviation	Missing		No. of Extremes[a]	
				Count	Percent	Low	High
Religion and life-conceptual influences	2022	4,1491	,68748	54	2,6	42	0
Inspiring lecturer	2016	4,3815	,54092	60	2,9	7	0
Interaction with fellow students	2066	3,8010	,63546	10	,5	11	0
Mentoring during theoretical and practical sessions	1875	3,8482	,82097	201	9,7	33	0
Interaction with school students during practical sessions	1655	4,3816	,49966	421	20,3	5	0
Family and extended family	2040	4,2032	,66613	36	1,7	28	0
a. Number of cases outside the range (Q1 - 1.5*IQR, Q3 + 1.5*IQR).							

Findings
Table 2A contains the results of the first factor analysis. Column 2 contains the six factors, in rank-order, that initially emerged as the strongest inspirational forces in the lives and studies of the entire group before any eliminations of nil-responses took place. Table 2B contains the results of the second factor analysis. In both cases the 'inspiring lecturers' remain at the top of the ranking.

Table 2A: Result of the first factor analysis

Rank order	Factor, ranked in terms of number of items loaded	Items loaded	Aggregate Mean (X)	Aggregate Median (Me)	Aggregate Standard Deviation (S.D.)
1.	Inspiring lecturers	93 96 94 99 97 90 95 98 91 92	4,35	4,50	0,60
2.	Family and extended family	1 2 3 4 5 6 7	4,10	4,14	0,68
3/4.	Teaching practice. Especially Interaction with school students during practical sessions	58 59 60 61 62 63 64	4,09	4,24	0,72
3/4.	Religion and life-	8 9 10 11 12 13 14	4.09	4.24	0,72

	conceptual sources	15 16 17 18 19 20 22 21 51 74			
5.	Mentoring during theoretical and practical sessions	88 87 89 77 78	3.82	4,00	0,84
6.	Interaction with fellow students	26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 37	3,80	3,82	0,63
7.	Literature and educational learning content	82 83 84 85 86	3,67	3,80	0,75

Table 2B: Result of the second factor analysis

Rank order	Factor, ranked in terms of number of items loaded	Items loaded	AggregateMean (X)	Aggregate Median (Me)	Aggregate Standard Deviation (S.D.)
1.	Inspiring lecturer	96,93,99,98,90, 97,95,91,94,92	4.40	4.50	0,52
2.	Teaching practice (especially interaction with learners and involvement in learning content)	63,59,61,64,60, 62	4.39	4.50	0,49
3.	Family and extended family	3,1,2,4	4.19	4.25	0,67
4.	Religion and life-conceptual influences	8,9,12,11,10,15,1 7,18,13,18,16,19, 20,22,14,74	4.12	4.27	0,70
5.	Mentoring during theoretical and practical sessions	87,88,89,77,78	3.87	4.00	0,80
6.	Interaction with fellow students/Peers	29,32,31,30,35,3 4,28,37,33,38	3.82	3.80	0,63

A comparison of Table 2A with Table 2B shows that the elimination of the nil-responses in the second round of factor analysis had a definite influence on the results. Table 2A contains all the responses, in other words also those of respondents who had not yet had any teaching practice in school settings. In this case, 'parents and family members' came second after the 'inspiring lecturers', followed by 'teaching practice' and so on. The second round of factor analysis, after elimination of the nil-responses, mostly of those who had not had practical teaching experience in schools, brought a different set of six factors to the surface. In this case, 'teaching practice' emerged as the most important source of inspiration, followed by 'family and extended family'. The others places in the ranking remained unaffected: 'religion and life conceptual sources' (fourth – however in the first round at the same level as 'teaching practice'), 'mentoring during theoretical and practical sessions' (fifth) and 'interaction with fellow students' (sixth).

Interestingly students seem to evaluate their sources of inspiration in another order if asked to compare (allocate weights to) the importance of the respective sources (items 101-108). In this section the respondent was required to evaluate the contexts with respect to relative influence: family and extended family, church / faith organisation, peer group, part-time job, sports and hobby. The question

was: By which one of these are you mostly inspired for your future occupation? You have a 100 points to divide among the eight different contexts.

Table 3: Comparison between responses to items 101-108 before removing outliers and non responses (first round) and after removing extremes and non-responses (second round)

Rank order (first round)	Contexts Items 101-108	Mean (X)	S.D.	Rank order (second round)	Contexts Items 101-108	Mean (X)	S.D.
1.	Family and extended family	22,60	13,71	1.	Family and extended family	22.22	14.10
2.	Church/religious organisation	18,45	13,43	2.	Teacher education institute	19.29	14.11
3.	Teacher education institute	18,34	13,83	3.	Church/religious organisation	18.28	12.96
4.	Friends (outside of the training context)	12,18	9,93	4.	Friends (outside of the training context)	11.96	9.83
5.	Fellow students	10,51	9,46	5.	Fellow students	10.95	9.44
6.	Hobby	10,05	8,95	6.	Hobby	9.91	8.84
7.	Sport	8,25	8,94	7.	Part-time work and voluntary work	8.13	8.86
8.	Part-time work and voluntary work	8,15	8,68	8.	Sport	7.62	8.02

The elimination of the outliers, including the nil-responses of those who had not had any practical teaching experience in schools, did not affect the importance of the role of family and extended family. It led to church / religious organisation and the teacher education institute exchanging places. Friends outside the training context and fellow students retained their level of importance as inspirational forces. Part-time and voluntary work and sport exchanged places.

Discussion of the findings

According to the second round of factor analysis, the six factors that surfaced (see Table 2B) explain approximately 59,97% of the total variance. Ideally, this should have been in the region of 70%. The relatively low explanation of variance in this particular case can be ascribed to two causes. The questionnaire contained a number of items that tended, as could be seen *ex post facto* from a Scree plot, to be discrete or disparate, i.e. not to be logically or otherwise connectable to any other variables. Examples of this are item 66 (I find a difficult class situation to be a challenge); 40 (Listening to music or making music touches me deeply) and 45 (Films (movies) and videos inspire me). The relatively low explanation of variance can arguably also be ascribed to the fact that the questionnaire was administered in three relatively widely differing national and cultural contexts (The Netherlands, Hungary and South Africa).

Table 2B reveals the six factors that in the case of those respondents that had experience of teaching practice in schools exerted the strongest inspirational role in their lives as future teachers. Factors pertaining to student educators and to actual teaching experience ranked first and second. Family, religion and life-conceptual influences came a strong third and fourth, with mentoring of theory and practice and the influence of peers not far behind.

A comparison of Table 2A with Table 2B shows that factor 1 pertains to inspiring teaching educators. The put it accurately, i.e. in terms of the content of the different items that loaded onto this factor: inspiring teacher educators provide their students with new insights (item 96), make their subject truly interesting (93), possess intimate knowledge of the teaching profession (99), contribute to their student's actions as a future teacher (98), possess a good knowledge of the subject (90), reveal

something of the self during a lesson (95), challenge their students to discover more about the subject (91), apply a variety of approaches and methods (94), and make their students aware of their abilities and capacities (92).

In Table 2B, regarding Factor 2, pertaining to the student teachers finding inspiration in their experiences and interactions with school learners during practical sessions, inspiration flowed from: interactions among the school students (item 63), responsibility showed by school students (64), lesson content (59), meaningful experiences in class (60), remarks by school students (61), and stimulating learning content (62). Interestingly, this factor was ranked as third/fourth when the outliers and the responses of those respondents who at that time had not yet had any experience of practical teaching in a school or classroom, were still part of the data base, and second when these respondents were excluded. The fact that this factor changed in position can arguably be ascribed to the fact that once student-teachers have experienced teacher practice, they regard interacting with the school students during their practical sessions as exciting. When their responses were eliminated from the data base, as reflected in Table 2B, teaching practice ascended to the second place. This direct experience (refer Authors, 2010) provides student teachers with energy and motivation for their future profession.

Strictly speaking, a comparison between a factor analysis (Tables 2A and B) and responses to individual items (Table 3) cannot be made. It is nevertheless interesting to note that when all the responses were bundled in terms of the second factor analysis, the factors 'inspiring lecturers' and 'teaching practice' were ranked first and second, whereas the individual responses in which contexts (as embodied in items 101 to 108 of the questionnaire) were weighted, showed that respondents thought that family and extended family had the strongest inspirational influence on them. This particular item retained first position in Table 3 also after the elimination of the outliers (nil-responses). The inspirational influence of church / religious organisation had to play second fiddle to the teacher education institute after the elimination. Teacher training experience seems to gain in importance in the view of those respondents who had had practical teaching experience in schools. The results of both kind of analyses suggests that the following can be regarded as the four most important contexts from which inspiration flows during the teacher education process: teacher educators and mentors, teaching practice, the family and the church/religious institution.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The investigation revealed that among this relatively large group of responding student teachers, at least the six factors enumerated in Table 2B should be kept in mind as strongly inspirational during teacher training. The survey suggests that teacher educators should be especially cognisant of the fact that inspiring lecturers / teacher educators make a difference during the training. If their as yet less inspiring colleagues want to be more inspiring they should concentrate on the ability to present their subject(s) in a truly interesting manner, to be more prepared to reveal something about the self in presenting a lesson and to be brave enough to confront the students.

The practical teaching sessions (in schools) should be regarded as the second most important inspirational influence in the training of student teachers. The designers of teacher education programmes should therefore take great pains with the planning of practical teaching sessions in the curriculum, and to include this experience early in the curriculum. By doing so, inspirational practical experiences can be connected to pedagogical and didactical theory, which in turn might lead to the forming of a solid professional identity.

It is not immediately clear how teacher educators should deal with the other factors. The results of this survey underscore, for instance, the importance of family, a factor never systematically discussed or taken into account in the processes of teacher education but play a significant role in the background. There can be no doubt that the mindsets of the student teachers are constantly being fed by sources flowing from their family and extended family. Students' previous socialisation in the family – and also influences still exerted on them when studying from home – has an enduring impact. Teacher educators would therefore be prudent to include topics pertaining to students' families and family life in assignments and class discussions because of their enduring inspirational influence on the minds of the students. We draw this conclusion based on the fact that the items in the questionnaire embodied aspects of inspiration that would arguably lead to changes in insight and behaviour. Astin (1993) did

not include family in his survey; if he had, he would probably also have found the family to be an important influence on students.

Although religion and life-conceptual influences are often perceived as private matters, there can be no doubt about the importance of this dimension in teacher education. Peers and fellow students also seem to form an important source of inspiration if one takes into account that around 20% of the influence can be contributed to them (refer Table 3). Tables 2A and 2B show that they were not the most important sources of inspiration in this particular survey. An interesting difference emerges when we compare this finding with that of Astin (1993), who found that 'the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years'. This difference can be explained by the fact that the two studies measured different concepts, namely 'influence' in Astin's case and 'inspiration' in this study. This study lends support to the assumption that 'being inspired' during undergraduate training should be distinguished from general influence that one might undergo. A comparison of the findings of the two studies suggests that 'inspiration' be distinguished from 'influence in general'.

Table 3 adds another interesting perspective, namely those sports, hobbies and part-time jobs, important as they may be in the lives of the student teachers; do not merit particular attention in the design of a teacher education curriculum. The items in which they figure in the questionnaire, namely sports (52), hobbies (55 and 56) and part-time work (46) did not load on any of the six factors. The fact that the respondents themselves only ranked them 6th, 7th and 8th (Table 3) shows that teacher educators' attention should rather be focused on stimulating inspiration potentially flowing from the six factors (Table 2B) as well as the five items ranked highly by the respondents (Table 3, columns 5 and 6).

CONCLUSION

In the first article in this trilogy, a phenomenological-interpretive analysis lent support to the contention that inspiration amounts to a student teacher being emotionally driven, enthused, guided, motivated or directed by sources towards the attainment of a particular goal, in this case to become a professional educator. This study completed the picture that started emerging in the first article in the sense that it shows what exactly it was that enthused, guided, motivated or directed the respondents in this particular study population in their quest of becoming professional educators. They seemed to be especially inspired by their lecturers and mentors, by the actual teaching practice in schools and by the interaction with school students, their family and extended family, their religion and other life-conceptual influences, their theoretical training as well as their peers. It also revealed that activities such as hobbies, part-time and voluntary work as well as sports played a relatively minor role as inspirational factors.

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