



Time for Class: Undergraduates' and Lecturers' Perceptions on Why Undergraduates Want to Teach

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Abstract

This paper reports upon the results of a small-scale qualitative investigation looking at the perceptions of students and lecturers regarding students' motivations to become teachers. The samples for the study were a group of final-year undergraduates on a non-QTS (Qualified Teacher Status) degree in Education Studies at a post-1992 university in the South-East Wales area and their lecturing staff, plus careers advisor. The aim of the study was to compare the perceptions of the two research samples with regard to students' motivations for wanting to become teachers. A particular focus of the study was to consider the relationship between students' social class and the extent to which (if at all) they cited extrinsic factors such as job security or pay as sources of motivation to enter teaching. The research revealed some degree of disjunction between the accounts given by the students and the members of staff. Focus group interviews with student samples indicated that although they initially highlighted intrinsic motivations for wanting to be teachers, when questioned about extrinsic factors, job security emerged as an important source of motivation. In contrast, individual interviews with staff members revealed more mixed responses, with a tendency to cite holidays as an important motivating factor in the students' aim to become teachers. The comments of some staff members also revealed an unwitting tendency to position students within a cultural deficit discourse based upon perceptions of students' limited career decision-making. It is concluded that it will be increasingly necessary for higher education teaching staff to have some awareness of the social context within which their students undertake career decision-making in view of a policy context in which universities are to become increasingly accountable for the employment outcomes of their graduates.

Keywords: Higher Education; Class; Gender; Career Decision-Making

Introduction

1.1 This article reports upon the results of a study into undergraduates' motivations for wanting to become teachers. The research sample was a group of final-year students on an Education Studies degree at a post-1992 university in the South Wales area. The student group was largely female and was categorised as working-class in terms of parental occupation. The particular focus of the study was upon the importance to the students of extrinsic factors such as pay and job security. The study focused upon extrinsic elements in view of evidence from previous research that such factors play a particularly important function in the career orientations of working-class undergraduates, and serve to make certain areas of public sector employment such as teaching and nursing attractive. The study therefore aimed to understand the extent to which (if any) such considerations played a part in the teaching ambitions of a group of female, working-class students on a degree course from which teaching was the single most popular intended career path. It is important to gain further understanding of how extrinsic factors may condition working-class undergraduates' perspectives of teaching, and their motivations for wanting to become teachers; although the gendered nature of the schools' teaching workforce in the U.K has been well researched, there has been comparatively much less work done on the role that young people's social class may play in their aim to become teachers. This paper aims to address this gap.

1.2 In addition to interviewing a sample of students on the nature of their motivations to become teachers, the study also interviewed members of the teaching staff on the Education Studies degree to obtain their perspectives on why teaching was a popular choice of career among students. The teaching staff were interviewed in the light of a policy context in which there is increased pressure upon higher education institutions (HEIs) to become engaged with issues of student employability; and in which HEIs are now required to make publicly available data on graduate career outcomes (BIS 2011)—information which forms one aspect among others by which HEIs will compete with each other for student 'custom' within an increasingly competitive market. Although university teaching staff have no direct accountability in this area within their everyday professional practice, it nevertheless forms an important part of the wider policy

framework within which they work. Put simply, a 'good' university is increasingly seen to be one with a good record of graduate employability (Boden and Nedeava 2010). In this respect, therefore, the staff members' views were considered important. However, official discourses on graduate employability and career decision-making are framed within a discourse of meritocracy which makes little if any reference to functionings of class (or gender or ethnicity) (Souto-Otero 2010). In view of this, the study aimed to understand to what extent (if any) the lecturers located the students' motivations within the material context of their social class. Here again, therefore, the focus of questioning was also upon the relative importance that extrinsic factors played in the students' aims to become teachers.

1.3 The next section of this paper will discuss existing literature on teaching as a form of employment, with a particular focus upon the available evidence on social class and the teaching workforce. Following this, research into motivations for teaching will also be discussed.

Teaching and Social Class

2.1 While the gendered nature of the teaching profession in the U.K has been well documented, there has been considerably less empirical research devoted to the *classed* nature of the teaching workforce. That is not to say that teaching as *a job* has not been the subject of extensive class analysis—indeed, far from it. There is now an extensive body of research that has explored the class position of teachers (Wright 1985; Hill 2005; Maguire 2005). Debate centres upon the question of whether teachers, as workers, can be seen as middle-class in view of their objective location in the labour market or whether they have become proletarianised (Maguire 2005). Hill (2005) is clear that the teaching profession has been proletarianised as a result of the effects of neo-liberal economic policies. Maguire (2005), however, sees teachers as occupying an ambivalent class location—on the one hand, teaching is now overwhelmingly a post-graduate occupation, thus implying middle-class status; on the other hand, the status of teaching has been eroded by decades of governmental attacks upon the profession which, in concert with the feminisation of the job, have led to teaching sometimes being called a 'semi-profession' (Maguire 2005: 6).

2.2 The position of teaching as a form of employment has, thus, been the subject of extensive class analysis. Nevertheless, there appears to have been little corresponding work done on the class origins of those who enter, or wish to enter, teaching and of the impact that class may have upon entrants' motivations. Two recent studies, however, offer some insights into the class background of entrants to the teaching profession. Purcell *et al.* (2005) studied the early career paths of undergraduates who completed a range of undergraduate degree courses from 38 HEIs in the U.K in 1995 and 1999. They found that graduates with a first degree (B.A, B.Ed, B.Sc) that conferred Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) to teach within the primary sector were more likely than their peers with a non-QTS first degree to have attended a less prestigious post-1992 university and to have attended a state secondary school as opposed to a private fee-paying school (Purcell *et al.* 2005: viii). In view of the well documented links in the U.K between social class, and type of school and type of HEI attended (Ball *et al.* 2002; Reay *et al.* 2001; Archer *et al.* 2003), the Purcell *et al.* (2005) study quite clearly indicates that teacher trainees who have followed a first degree route into primary phase teaching tend to be from lower socio-economic groups than the non-QTS graduate population.

2.3 Interestingly, however, the Purcell *et al.* (2005) study also found that the socio-economic profiles of graduates who had qualified to teach (within either the primary or secondary phases) via the Post-Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE) route were much closer to those of the non-QTS graduate population (Purcell *et al.* 2005: 10). In fact, some teachers who have entered the profession through the post-graduate route clearly have a higher socio-economic profile than the majority of their non-QTS peers. The Teach First scheme, in operation since 2003, aims to attract high-achieving graduates who would not otherwise be attracted to teaching to enter the profession. As Smart *et al.* (2009) note, the participants, who are mostly graduates of elite Russell Group universities in the U.K, tend to be from established middle-class, professional backgrounds. The Teach First programme is, however, only a small-scale one, training only a small percentage of teachers in the U.K and so, as Smart *et al.* (2005: 51) observe, its trainees are not representative of post-graduate trainees in general.

Motivations to enter Teaching

3.1 Literature dealing with motivations to enter teaching has tended not to relate such motivations to social class; similarly, research that is focused upon teaching and social class has not generally been concerned with the motivations of teachers, trainee teachers or potential entrants to enter the profession. However, some studies have made some links between the two aspects. In their study of middle-class trainees on the Teach First scheme, Smart *et al.* (2009) were not primarily concerned with the trainees' motivations to enter teaching, but nonetheless they offer some valuable insights. Interviews with the Teach First trainees revealed that they tended to position themselves as coming from a particular fraction of the middle-class: 'high-flying' graduates who would stand comparison with their peers in banking and finance. For these trainees, the sharp disjunction between their own relatively advantaged social backgrounds and those of their working-class pupils was in itself a motivation for wishing to enter the training programme; challenging schools represented an 'experience' that they wished to be exposed to. While the trainees were motivated principally for intrinsic reasons, with an aim to combat poor attainment, they were also prompted by more extrinsic, career-related concerns. Teach First represented a valuable opportunity for the development of 'the enterprising self' through the building up of a portfolio of hard and soft skills (Smart *et al.* 2009: 41). Despite the largely altruistic motivations of the Teach First trainees, Smart *et al.* (2009: 50) are critical of the ways in which they tended to unconsciously position their pupils in negative, stereotyped ways which ultimately served to lead to the reproduction of working-class disadvantage. These are criticisms that have been echoed in previous research that has examined the often difficult relationships between middle-class teachers and working-class pupils (Reay 2006; Dunne and Gazeley 2008).

3.2 Class also inheres in the motivations of the subjects of a study by Maguire (2005), but in a rather different way. In her research with five working-class women who had become teachers in the late 1960s/early 1970s Maguire (2005) was also not directly concerned with the women's motivations to

become teachers. Nevertheless, she too offers some valuable insights into the relationship between social class and motivations to teach. The career horizons of the women were circumscribed by classed and gendered social relations. While teaching represented a form of 'emancipation' from these restrictions with the promise of a degree of social mobility, it was also a relatively 'safe' form of mobility; it was not such a 'risky' prospect as university, it did not take the students 'too far' from their class origins, and it held out the promise of a secure job at the end of the course (Maguire 2005: 8).

3.3 Such concerns with the safety and security of work have been a prominent theme in other research that has examined the career orientations of working-class undergraduates. For example, Brown and Scase (1994) found that students from lower socio-economic backgrounds were far more likely to put a priority on security in 'safe' professions within the public sector than undergraduates with higher volumes of dominant cultural capital and greater familial material resources, who were much more likely to adopt a 'flexible' portfolio approach to career development. More generally speaking, personal social 'improvement' has been found to be one of the benefits typically attributed to participation in higher education among working-class young people, including those with no stated intention of progressing on to degree study. For example, the idea of 'bettering oneself' occupationally, through the acquisition of a degree, was cited as a very important potential motivation for H.E. study among the working-class non-participants interviewed by Archer and Hutchings (2000). This finding contrasts quite markedly with evidence from studies with middle-class young people who are much more inclined to identify a personal interest in a subject as their motivation (Archer *et al.* 2003, 127). Having said this, however, working-class orientations towards study and employment are not, of course, monolithic and there is evidence of some distinctions between men and women, with working-class female students tending to place more value on employment security than their male peers who tend to highlight the financial returns to a degree (Archer *et al.* 2003).

3.4 There are, as noted previously, other studies which have examined more directly than the research studies discussed above motivations to enter teaching, but which make no attempt to relate these to social class. Purcell *et al.* (2005) found that a mixture of intrinsic and extrinsic factors played a part in the decision-making of the participants who had completed first degree courses or post-graduate certificates in education within their study. Although they recorded the socio-economic backgrounds of the subjects within their survey (discussed above), they do not explicitly link motivations to class locations. Nevertheless, it is possible to make some inferences. For example, they record that the job security associated with teaching was frequently alluded to by their interviewees (Purcell *et al.* 2005: 21); as Purcell *et al.* (2005) record that graduates with QTS in their study tend to come from lower socio-economic backgrounds than those without, and in view of the evidence on working-class undergraduates' career orientations—as discussed above—it is not unreasonable to infer some link between the participants' class origins and the weight given to extrinsic factors such as job security.

3.5 Other research studies have also found that extrinsic factors are important to teachers or aspirant teachers. A survey of 550 trainee teachers by Hayes (2004) found that extrinsic considerations such as favourable working hours and perceived long holidays featured most prominently in the decision to embark upon teacher training. Similar results were recorded by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000) who compared the perceptions of teaching as a career of two groups of students: those considering entering teaching, and those not. They surveyed 298 undergraduates on a range of courses at the University of York; it was found that extrinsic factors such as salaries featured most prominently among all the participants. However, intrinsic factors were most important to those participants who had been considering teaching. In fact, the available evidence suggests that entrants to the teaching profession are principally motivated by intrinsic rather than extrinsic reasons. This was the conclusion of two reviews into the factors affecting recruitment and retention in PGCE and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) courses in the U.K (Edmonds *et al.* 2002; Teeman *et al.* 2005). These findings were echoed in other studies conducted with qualified teachers in which it was found that intrinsic or altruistic motivations, such as the desire to work with children, were more important than extrinsic factors such as pay (Hobson *et al.* 2004; Barmby, 2006).

3.6 Evidence from the literature thus indicates a balance of intrinsic and extrinsic factors in play in the motivation to teach. However, the majority of the studies reviewed within this paper have been conducted with applicants for teacher training courses, trainee teachers or qualified, serving teachers. The subjects of these studies have, therefore, made a decision to enter teaching (at least to some extent, in the case of the trainees) or are actually teaching (in the case of teachers) and their motivations for becoming teachers need to be viewed in this context. There is very little research which explores the motivations to be teachers of undergraduates, or graduates, who are not already either on teacher training courses or who are working teachers. The exception to this from among the literature reviewed here is the study by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000). This present paper addresses this gap in the literature in two ways: firstly, it reports upon the motivations for wishing to be teachers of a sample of final-year undergraduates on a degree (Education Studies) that does not offer Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), but which is seen to be an indirect route into teaching; secondly, the accounts given by the students are then compared with the perceptions of their lecturers regarding the students' motivations for wanting to be teachers. As indicated previously, the focus of this study is upon the importance of extrinsic factors as possible motivators.

3.7 The next section of this paper will describe the research methods of the study. Following that, the findings will be presented and analysed; finally, a discussion section will conclude the article.

The Research Study

Case study institution

4.1 The case study institution is a post-1992 university in the South-East Wales area. The university recruits substantially from within the South Wales and South West England area. The social background of the students varies considerably between courses, however, an overall majority of the in-take could be categorised as working-class and are mostly the first generation in their families to experience H.E.

B.A. (Hons) in Education Studies

4.2 Education Studies aims to present a critical approach to education as a field of study, drawing from sociology, philosophy, psychology and history (Ward 2008: 2). At the case-study institution, in the 2010–11 academic year there were 103 students enrolled on the third-year of the B.A (Hons) degree, of whom 89 (86.5%) were female and 14 (13.5%) were male. The university's own ethnic categories were used to enable students to self-categorise. 86 of the 89 students (96%) described themselves as 'White British'; of the remaining three students, two were 'Asian or Asian British Indian' and one was 'Other Asian'.

The Student Focus Groups

4.3 Four student focus group sessions were conducted between 6 October 2010 and 21 January 2011 (see table 1). The participants were drawn from a list of volunteers. The sample aimed to reflect the gender balance of the wider third-year Education Studies cohort, and thus the sampling strategy aimed at a minimum quota sample of three male students. Apart from the quota sample for male students, all participants were selected at random on a convenience sample basis from the list of volunteers.

Table 1. Date and Gender Composition of Student Focus Groups

	Date of interview	Gender composition
Focus Group 1	6.10.10	5 females
Focus Group 2	7.10.10	4 males and 1 female
Focus Group 3	8.10.10	6 females
Focus Group 4	21.1.11	5 females

4.4 As this study is focused upon the relationship between the social class of the student interviewees and their motivations for wanting to be teachers, it was necessary to obtain some data on the students' class backgrounds. As a starting point, all students were asked to indicate parental occupations prior to the focus group sessions. On this basis, it was determined that the students were from working-class or 'new' middle-class backgrounds, with most parents employed in semi-routine or lower technical level employment (NS-SEC classes 6 and 5). It is recognised, however, that an individual's objective economic conditions comprise just one facet of their social class. Class should be viewed not just in terms of economic position, but in terms of '*...a complex amalgam of economic and material conditions as well as embodied lived experiences and subjectivities*' (Maguire 2005: 4). On this understanding, class is created discursively as well as materially and is the outcome of shifting and unstable *positioning* rather than being simply a *position*. Moreover, although this study is concerned with the relationship between social class and career motivations, it is also recognised that class is complexly intermeshed with other aspects of an individual's social identity such as gender and ethnicity. Thus, we need to see, for example, that class is always racialised or gendered (Archer 2003: 21).

4.5 On the same form, students were asked to indicate their intended career aims. Sixteen of the twenty-one indicated teaching, two indicated social work, one indicated careers adviser while the remaining two were unsure. All the accounts presented within this paper are from students who had indicated an aim to become teachers.

Staff Interviews

4.6 Individual staff interviews were conducted between 17 August 2010 and 14 December 2010. All six members of the Education Studies teaching team, three women and two men, were interviewed. In addition, it was also felt important to interview the University's careers advisor in view of her important function in regards to understanding students' motivations for wanting to enter teaching. Both the staff interviews and the student focus groups followed a semi-structured approach. Consent was obtained from the participants to tape-record the interviews which were then transcribed. The data was analysed following the model developed by Auerbach and Silverstein (2003). Using this method, the data was 'reduced' and then categorised into 'themes' and then interpreted theoretically.

4.7 This is an interpretivist study based upon relatively small sample sizes (21 students and 6 staff members). It is recognised that the small sample sizes employed within interpretivist research designs mean that the generalisability of the findings of such studies, that is, the degree to which the findings may be applicable within other similar contexts (Devine and Heath 1999: 10) is problematic. However, my aim here has not been to derive statistical generalisations based upon large sample sizes. Rather, the interviews within this paper are presented in the tradition of the small-scale 'instrumental' case study in which a case is examined as a means to excavate wider issues (Stake 2000). On this basis, therefore, generalisability is understood to relate to the possibility of making theoretical inferences rather than empirical generalisations (Silverman 2010).

4.8 The next section will present and discuss the findings from the interviews with the students and the teaching staff. This will then be followed by a discussion.

Student Interviews

5.1 Students who had indicated an aim to be a teacher were asked two questions:

- Why do you want to be a teacher?
- How important are aspects such as job security, pay, pension and holidays in your ambition to become a teacher?

The students' answers to the first question are discussed below, followed by responses to the second question.

Motivations to be a teacher

5.2 For many of the student interviewees, teaching was a career they felt they had 'always' wanted to do; and subsequent experiences on their Education Studies course, such as teaching-related work placements, had served to confirm this ambition:

First of all, because it's what I've always wanted to do. Like, even when I was little, I've never changed my career. I've always wanted to be a teacher. And I think it's just because I enjoy it. The placements I've done it, it's because that's what I want to do, I enjoy it.

('Deborah'^[1]: Focus Group 4)

5.3 The sense from the comments of the participants of this study that teaching was a long-standing career objective, and not a recent or casually reached decision, reflects the findings of previous studies which have explored motivations to teach (Purcell *et al.* 2005: 19). The great majority of the student interviewees framed their motivations to be a teacher within a 'teaching as vocation' form of discourse. The desire to help children and to undertake socially rewarding work were the main themes that arose from their comments. Again, such altruistic and intrinsic factors have featured very highly in the findings of previous investigations in this area (Hobson *et al.* 2004; Barmby, 2006):

I definitely, a hundred percent want to work with children 'cos I, I just think they're so funny. I don't know, it's rewarding, isn't it? And it's really like, I really enjoy it.

('Margaret': Focus Group 4)

Erm, I've always wanted to work with children. Teaching gives them the best start in life. It's a rewarding job. ('April': Focus Group 3) Because I've always wanted to do it since I was young. It's weird, like, I get a good sense from helping people who are more vulnerable than me. I've always wanted to do it, so that's why.

('Kate': Focus Group 2)

5.4 Other students, although a smaller number, highlighted the fact that teaching was not a 'nine-to-five' job but, instead, offered variety and interest. Once again, the variety that a career in teaching is perceived to offer has been cited as an important source of motivation by participants in other studies (Purcell *et al.* 2005; Barmby 2006):

I just love children. I think they're interesting and nothing's ever going to be the same.

('Marion': Focus Group 4)

Erm, I just think it's interesting. It's not your regular nine to five, 'cos it's longer. It's just what I want to do.

('Judith': Focus Group 3)

5.5 Only one student, of the sixteen who wanted to be teachers, made any unprompted reference to extrinsic factors as sources of motivation. In this case, teaching does not seem to exert a 'pull' attraction for the student; rather, the only other employment prospect to be identified is routine and/or poorly paid work, which appears to be exerting a 'push' effect upon the participant's decision-making:

Erm, just because it's a nice job. It's better than being in like a labour job, customer-service kind of job and because of the holidays really, pretty much.

('Samantha': Focus Group 1)

5.6 'Push' factors—those factors which are rooted in a dissatisfaction with present circumstances—emerged as important sources of motivation for some of the participants surveyed by Purcell *et al.* (2005). In that study, however, push factors tended to be experienced and acted upon by older subjects who had undergone periods of unsatisfactory employment or unemployment (Purcell *et al.* 2005: 23).

The Importance of Extrinsic Factors

5.7 Questions about the importance of extrinsic factors to the students' aims to become teachers elicited, perhaps surprisingly, quite different answers. In three of the four focus groups, although the students had initially employed a 'teaching as vocation' form of discourse when asked about their motivations for teaching, the majority were also clear that extrinsic factors such as job security and pay were important considerations for them:

Interviewer: *And how important is job security to you?*
Judith: *Incredibly [General agreement] because if you want to think about moving out, you need that security, you need that for your mortgage and things, so...*

(Focus Group 3)

5.8 The importance that the students accorded to job security is echoed in the study by Kyriacou and Coulthard (2000), discussed previously, in which undergraduates also rated it highly in their choice of career. However, opinions were more divided on just how secure teaching was as a job. Some felt that teaching was a 'job for life' while others pointed to the effects of government spending cuts on likely employment prospects. The comment below typifies comments of the first type:

Schools aren't going to close down, are they? 'Cos there's obviously these days businesses are closing 'cos they can't afford to run whereas schools are needed all the time.
(Kate': Focus Group 2)

5.9 While job security was an important consideration for all students within three of the four focus groups, only one group made any unprompted mention of holidays as a possible extrinsic motivating factor. Even here, however, the impression was not that it was a central deciding factor but a useful 'side benefit':

Interviewer: *Would that [holidays] be an issue for you in terms of considering teaching?*
Oliver: *I think it's an issue, yeah, it's a good thing. I think the amount of time off can be a good thing to be honest [laughter].*
Derek: *That side of it's good.*
Kate: *Yeah*
Oliver: *Especially teaching my subject*
John: *yeah six weeks*
Kate: *Yeah, it's like being one of the children really because you have the same amount of time off apart from your teacher training days and that sort of thing.*

(Focus Group 2)

5.10 In contrast to the comments of the other three groups, the students in one focus group were clear that extrinsic factors did not (or should not) matter:

- Interviewer:** *How important are things like pension, security and holidays in deciding to become a teacher?*
- Andrea:** *I don't think so really. If people want to do it, they're gonna do it. They're not gonna think, 'they've got good holidays, I'm going to do that'.*
- Marion:** *...it's from the heart, isn't?*
- All** [Nodding] *yeah*
- Deborah:** *It's got to be one hundred percent that's what you wanna do regardless of holidays. Obviously you wouldn't work, you know, three hundred and sixty five days of the year, but if they said to you, you only get twenty days a year like other jobs, I think you would do it anyway.*
- Marion:** *Yeah, that's what it's like, it's more emotional...*
- Deborah:** *It's more passionate. You've got a passion for teaching, you do it because that's what you wanna do regardless of holidays ...*

(Focus Group 4)

5.11 In describing what they perceive to be 'acceptable' reasons for wanting to be primary school teachers (commitment, passion and self-investment in 'emotional' work), the female interviewees of focus group one are maintaining the 'teaching as vocation' form of discourse that they employed when first asked about their motivations for wishing to become teachers. Evidence shows that 'socially useful' work is rated more highly in career decision-making by female graduates than male graduates (Purcell and Elias 2004: 34). It is not possible for this present study to draw any conclusions in this regard due to the very small number of male interviewees; however, as previously noted, all students (including the male interviewees) initially articulated their motivations in terms of a sense of vocation. With regard to teaching (particularly within the primary sector), this form of social commitment has historically carried highly gendered overtones. As Forrester (2005: 273) notes, the teaching of young children has come to be seen as 'women's work' since the end of the nineteenth century; it came to be viewed as a 'natural' activity, and a logical extension of women's perceived instincts for 'nurturing'. On the face of it, therefore, the students' emphasis upon intrinsic/altruistic factors would seem to preclude any consideration of extrinsic factors in their aim to become teachers. However, if we accept that sociological explanations must be sought 'outside' of individuals' narrative accounts, and placed within a framework of wider structural material and cultural relations (Young 1999), then it may be argued that there is no necessary dichotomy between intrinsic and extrinsic motivations here.

5.12 I believe it is not unreasonable to see the gendered discourses of emotional self-investment employed by the interviewees to be also linked to a need for relatively 'safe' employment within a graduate labour market that is still marked by sharp inequalities of gender. Research tells us, for example, that males typically earn about 10% more than females shortly after graduating and this gap rises to about 25% by the time graduates reach their mid-40s (Purcell and Elias 2004:7). Public sector employment in health and education in the U.K attracts female graduates in much higher proportionate numbers than male graduates, and one reason (among others) for this is the greater weight that female graduates tend to place upon job security than their male counterparts (Purcell and Elias 2004: 34). Finally, if we are to place the participants' comments within their wider social context, we must also remember that they are *working-class* women. Here again, evidence clearly demonstrates that graduates from working-class backgrounds earn less than their middle-class counterparts (Pollard *et al.* 2004; Furlong and Cartmel 2005), and are more likely to place emphasis upon relative job security (Brown and Scase 1994).

5.13 Having presented and discussed the students' comments in regard to motivations for teaching, the next section will present and discuss the comments of the Education Studies lecturers and of the university careers advisor.

Lecturers' Views

6.1 In order to obtain the perspectives of the lecturers and the careers advisor with regard to the research focus of this paper, the following two questions were asked to each member of staff:

- Why do you think Education Studies students want to be teachers?
- How important do you think aspects such as job security, pay, pension and holidays are in the students' ambitions to become teachers?

The questions were, thus, intended to mirror the wording of those posed to the students. This was done in order to enable a comparison of the views of the two research samples. The staff's answers to the first question are discussed below, followed by responses to the second question.

Staff perspectives on why students want to be teachers

6.2 Staff perspectives on students' motivations to be teachers were quite mixed. Three of the six members of staff volunteered intrinsic reasons, reflecting closely the vocation discourse employed by the students themselves and previous research studies in this area (Hobson *et al.* 2004; Barmby 2006). The comment below is typical:

They have a passion about learning and holistic child development and so they're keen to work within a school setting. I think that some of them have talked about their own experiences as pupils within school as very positive and they see themselves becoming a primary school teacher.
(‘Sarah’: Lecturer)

6.3 By contrast, two other members of staff, while not ruling out intrinsic motivations, were quick to volunteer gender as an important contextual factor:

Often, particularly in respect of the girls, they have a maternal instinct that the job appeals to and they don't look much beyond that. They feel comfortable with that path when they come in to it. Now for some, they will stay with that path and it will be exactly right for them...For others though, it...they could have done other things. I...it does really worry me sometimes that they haven't given it a lot of thought.
(‘Rhiannon’: Careers Advisor)

I guess that one of the main reasons is to do with gender. The students tend to be predominantly female and have a special yearning to work with younger children so most of our students want to progress on to the PGCE primary. Other reasons I would suggest are that school is the only long term meaningful experience they've had outside of their families although some will have been here in a part-time environment, then I suppose school will be an environment they're familiar with, they see security in and perhaps having had a good time in school, it's something they'd like to stay with.
(‘Phillip’: Lecturer)

6.4 It has already been noted within this paper that teaching, particularly in the primary phase, is a highly gendered profession in the U.K; furthermore, I have also argued that some of the students' comments on motivations to teach—with their emphasis upon ‘passion’ and ‘emotional’ investment—may be viewed as being gendered in nature. The comments of the two members of staff indicate a clear awareness of the ways in which young people’s career decision-making can be framed within gendered discourses from an early age. The staff are, thus, clearly aware of what Hodkinson and Sparkes (1997) term the ‘pragmatic rationality’ behind the students’ motivations: decision-making which is socially embedded, based upon partial information and affected by emotions. Nevertheless, if we employ another construct from Hodkinson and Sparkes, ‘horizons for action’, or, ‘...*the arena within which action can be taken and decisions made*’ (1997: 34), it is also evident that these two members of staff are very concerned about the way in which they perceive gender to have ‘funnelled’ many of the students into a rather unconsidered career option.

6.5 Only one member of staff made any unprompted reference to extrinsic factors. In this case, the lecturer believed that the students were motivated by the promise of job security:

I just think it's come from their own experiences in school and just working. They think it's going to be just working with little children, it's just going to be quite nice working with little children. But, I think that they think it's a real job for life as well, they think that once they've got it, sort of PGCE, they're set, they're set now for good—'I'll be a teacher for life'.
(‘Emma’: Lecturer)

6.6 We have seen that job security was important to the student interviewees of this study, and that this reflects the findings of previous research studies (Kyriacou and Coulthard 2000). However, the extrinsic factors identified by staff members as important sources of motivation were rather more mixed, as I shall discuss in the following section.

Staff perspectives on the importance of extrinsic factors

6.7 When asked about the importance of extrinsic factors, two members of staff argued that, in their experience, such considerations did not weigh in the students’ decision-making; these lecturers continued to attribute intrinsic/altruistic motivations:

I think that the ones that are focused on becoming teachers, the ones that I say have that vocational drive, I think that perhaps they see intrinsic factors more important than that—helping children, educating others, helping people along, up the ladder. All those things. I don't think they're motivated by any extrinsic factors. (‘Adrian’: Lecturer)

6.8 Three of the six members of staff identified holidays to be a source of motivation. The consensus across these comments was that the students had somewhat unrealistic expectations of the amount of time off they could expect.

Well, I think to the outside world teaching looks a big shiny, rosy world, doesn't it, in terms of having six weeks' holiday in the summer? Erm, but I think, you know, maybe when they do actually experience the world of the teacher, it's not that six week's free, it's not that time off etcetera, you don't finish at three o'clock. So, I think sometimes the perceptions are different to the reality of teaching. (‘Christine’: Lecturer)

6.9 It will be recalled, however, that only one of the four student focus groups alluded to holidays, and even that was essentially a light-hearted reference. Despite the importance that the students attached to job security, only two members of staff identified this to be an important factor. The careers advisor

discussed job security in terms of the 'safety' of public sector employment compared with the greater level of 'risk' associated with a portfolio-style career within the private sector:

Security is a big thing. It's part of the...part of the profession, having a single career route to look at, something that is safe and structured whereas often private sector jobs are...your career route is much more crazy paving pathed...Having something that is safe and structured, or perceived to be, is part of the attraction.
(Rhiannon': Careers Advisor)

6.10 The comments of one of the lecturers, however, imply a strong sense of disapproval in relation to the students' need for secure employment. Here, job security is linked with pay and holidays in a list of what appear to be 'unacceptable' (or, at least, perhaps 'naïve') motives for wishing to become a teacher. In this respect, these comments offer a reflection of the 'teaching as vocation' discourse employed by the students of focus group one:

I think it's [extrinsic factors] very important with most of them but I think that's to do with their age as well. They really think that this is going to set them on their way now—'I'm going to be set for life in this job'. And they think it's a good rate of pay. The holidays—err, you know, a few of them have mentioned the holidays which is a big thing and I think that they just think it's, sort of, a good number.
(Emma': Lecturer)

6.11 Finally, it was notable that although the issue of the social 'prestige' associated with teaching was not raised as a question, three of the staff interviewees volunteered perceived social status as a strong source of extrinsic motivation to enter the profession:

Well, I think it's probably from their own experience of the education system and the role models they've seen. Erm, they probably see teaching as quite a valued profession
(Christine': Lecturer)

I think there's something about the status of teaching, particularly primary teaching, which I think has grown in stature, I mean in status, in Wales in the last fifteen, twenty years. It's gained a parity in some respects with secondary teaching...and has a kind of social respectability.
(Rhiannon': Careers Advisor)

6.12 None of the student interviewees spoke directly in terms of 'status' or 'respectability'. Nevertheless, as I have previously argued, individuals' subjective accounts should be viewed in the context of the wider structural relations within which they are located. The intersectional effects of class and gender produce particular subject positionings which individuals inhabit to varying degrees of subordination or resistance. The students of this study are largely *female* and *working-class*, a social group which has traditionally been subject to processes of pathologisation and demonisation (Skeggs 1997). Teaching may well represent to them 'respectability' and the possibility of the denial of an imposed subject position. However, this interpretation is, of course, open to question, not least because of the relative fall in professional prestige that teaching has suffered over the past four decades (Maguire 2005).

6.13 On a final note, it may be useful to consider how the staff members' own social class backgrounds may have framed their perceptions of the students' motivations to teach and, in particular, their criticisms of the role of extrinsic factors such as holidays and job security in these motivations. All of the members of staff clearly identified themselves as having come from working-class origins, with parents engaged in manual employment. Furthermore, three of the lecturers had entered higher education as mature students in their late thirties, becoming university lecturers only within three years of the research for this present study. It is possible then, that in the relationship between the lecturers of working-class origin and the working-class students of this study, we may see some resonances of the relationship between the GNVQ Business Studies students and their tutors as discussed within the study by Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003). Like the tutors discussed by Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003), many of the lecturers share educational biographies similar to those of their students in terms of fractured educational experiences and the struggles to 'become somebody' (Wahlberg and Gleeson 2003: 434). As with the GNVQ tutors discussed by Wahlberg and Gleeson (2003), they will be familiar with the difficulties and discipline necessary to achieve a successful teaching career, and also with the growing insecurities associated with the modern profession (Ball 2008). Moreover, like the GNVQ tutors, it appears that at least some of the lecturers of this present study feel that their students have unrealistic expectations of the world of work.

Discussion

7.1 This paper has reported upon the results of a study into the motivations for wanting to become teachers of a group of final-year undergraduates on an Education Studies degree. The particular focus of the investigation has been upon examining the relationship between the social class of the students and the relative importance of extrinsic factors in their motivations. The perspectives of members of staff, lecturers and the university careers advisor, have also been presented and analysed. In comparing the perspectives of the two research samples, it is apparent that there is some degree of disjunction between them. While most students initially highlighted intrinsic motivations for wishing to become teachers, only three of the six staff interviewees did the same. Similarly, although most students cited job security as an important extrinsic factor, only two staff members referred to this. Generally, the staff attributed a wider range of intrinsic and extrinsic motivations, with holiday time being the single most commonly mentioned extrinsic factor. However, a note of methodological caution should be sounded here. The students were interviewed in focus groups, and previous research tells us that this research tool can produce a distinct tendency towards group conformity of responses (Stokes and Bergin 2006). If one considers this, and the additional factor that they were being interviewed by a member of staff, it is possible that the students may have felt a degree of pressure to voice 'acceptable' (i.e. intrinsically-related) motivations for wishing to become teachers. By contrast, the teachers were questioned through individual interviews and, here again, research indicates that this research tool can have an 'empowering' effect upon participants,

offering the possibility of greater non-conformity of expression than in focus groups (Stokes and Bergin 2006). It is possible, therefore, that the use of individual interviews may account for the greater heterogeneity of responses in the staff members' comments as compared to those of the students.

7.2 It has been argued within this paper that the students' concern for job security is rooted within wider material and cultural social relations which systemically disadvantage female graduates, and especially working-class female graduates such as those of this present study. The question of whether, and to what extent, lecturing and careers advice staff understand the social context in which undergraduates make career decisions is not one of interest to educational researchers alone. As Boden and Nedeva (2010) note, higher education has a key role to play (albeit one heavily framed and mediated by the state) within the new discourse of graduate employability. This discourse places a premium on the demonstrable economic utility of higher education, and on the direct 'relevance' of educational programmes to employer needs (Boden and Nedeva 2010: 41). It also places an onus on HEIs to maintain and to make publicly available data on graduate employability. Of course, as discussed previously, university teaching staff have no direct responsibilities within this latter area. However, in the current policy context, the success of their institution is increasingly contingent upon their graduates' employment outcomes. Lecturers, therefore, have a clear professional interest in their students' career decision-making. But what do they actually know about how such decisions are made?

7.3 Official policy-related discourse on graduate employability and career decision-making (CBI/UUK 2009) has tended to be technocratic in nature, premised upon human capital assumptions and emphasising a form of technical rationality (Tomlinson 2010). By contrast, it is clear that the staff members interviewed for this study were aware, to differing degrees, of some of the social factors which frame their students' motivations to be teachers. In short, staff appeared aware of the 'pragmatic rationality' (Hodkinson and Sparkes 1997) on which decision-making was based. However, while staff showed some cognisance of the social context behind the students' motivations, I would argue that some (but by no means all) of the lecturers' comments betray an unwitting propensity to view the students' motivations within deficit terms. This was evident, for example, in the comments by two members of staff in relation to gender, and in one lecturer's comments arguing that students regarded teaching as a 'good number'. These remarks are, doubtless, based in a sincere concern for the ways in which they believe the students may foreclose other options available to them (through gendered assumptions) or may entertain 'unrealistic' expectations of teaching (through a need for secure employment). While such concerns are well intentioned, they obscure the extent to which the success at university of students from poorer socio-economic backgrounds is likely to be a product of considerable personal resilience, and that such students, as Clegg (2011: 96) notes, are likely to be among the most intellectually able in their communities.

Notes

¹All names used are pseudonyms.

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