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# Journeys to teaching: Autonomy shifts in pre-service teachers' narratives of becoming a teacher

By:

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## Research report

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**Supervisor:** Prof Lee Rusznyak

# Abstract

Internationally and in South Africa, there have been calls for the admission to teacher education programmes to be based on initial commitment to teaching. They claim a high attrition rate of early career teachers because they chose to do a teaching qualification by default rather than by choice. These calls, which presume that the future commitment of pre-service teachers to teaching can be predicted at the outset, lack empirical support. This study adopts a sociological approach to examining pre-service teachers' journeys into teaching and through teacher education programmes. It uses the Autonomy dimension of Legitimation Code Theory to compare the knowledge/s that pre-service teachers seek and the benefits they hope to derive from that knowledge at the start and middle of their teacher preparation programmes. The study involves narratives from 77 pre-service teachers completing a four-year Bachelor of Education Degree and an online survey with 32 of these participants. Narrative data is drawn from a large-scale South African research project associated with the Teacher Choices in Action module. I use autonomy pathways from Legitimation Code Theory to analyse how pre-service teachers' positions on the autonomy plane change about the knowledge they seek and the benefits they hope to derive during their teacher preparation. The findings of this study show that, initially, 52% of participants entered initial teacher education reluctantly or with reservations, while 48% were interested in teaching from the outset; however, during the B.Ed. Degree, these reservations diminished, and 81% of the participants actively sought knowledge for teaching and regarded benefits derived from participating in teaching. Only 1% of participants retained their initial reservations. Nearly all participants' positions on the autonomy plane changed over time, highlighting the importance of understanding the mechanisms behind these shifts to comprehend why students persist with their studies and commit to teaching regardless of their initial motivations. The shifts observed were prompted by personal experiences of tutoring others (41%), students' interaction with teachers (28%), their acquisition of new theoretical insights into teaching and their subject specialisation (17%), and school-based teaching experiences (5%). The study concludes that the initial motivations of pre-service teachers are not reliable indicators of their long-term commitment to the teaching profession and should not be used as criteria for admission to teacher education programmes.



**Keywords:** Legitimation Code Theory, autonomy pathways, motivations, initial teacher education, pre-service teacher, journeys.

## Statement of academic honesty

I Bongumenzi Mthobisi Mkhabela declare that this thesis entitled “Journeys to teaching: Autonomy shifts in pre-service teachers’ narratives of becoming a teacher” is my own work. It has never been submitted to another university for a degree or exam. I understand that plagiarism is improper and I followed the guidelines by properly referencing other people's thoughts and opinions.

This report includes one section (parts of the conceptual and analytic framework) that has been co-authored by myself, other B Ed Honours and our supervisors. There was a discussion of the translation devices for positional autonomy and relational autonomy because we were all working on a broader study of student journeys into and through teacher education using different student cohorts.

**Signature**: 

**Student Number**: 1863337

**Date**: 30 June 2024

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## Dedication

This research report is dedicated to my late Mom (Khanyisile Regine Mkhabela) who now breathes easily in His arms. Her unwavering support, guidance, and love have been the driving force behind my academic pursuits. Although she is no longer with us, her spirit continues to inspire and motivate me. This work is a tribute to her enduring legacy, and I hope that she would be proud of the knowledge I have gained and the contributions I have made to my field of study. Thank you, Mom, for being my guiding light.

*In memory's embrace, I hold you near,*
*My dearest mom, forever dear.*
*Though time has passed, your love remains,*
*A guiding light through life's complex domains.*

*In every page of this research report,*
*Your wisdom and care, I'll forever extol.*
*With gratitude and love, I dedicate this page,*
*To the mom whose memory will never fade.*

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## List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| **B.Ed.** | Bachelor of Education |
| **DHET** | Department of Higher Education and Training |
| **EGD** | Engineering Graphics and Design |
| **ITE** | Initial Teacher Education |
| **LCT** | Legitimation Code Theory |
| **MRTEQ** | Minimum Requirement for Teacher Education Qualification policy (DHET, 2015) |
| **PA** | Positional autonomy |
| **PGCE** | Post Graduate Certificate in Education |
| **RA** | Relational autonomy |
| **TLDCIP** | Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme |
| **WIL** | Work-integrated learning |

# **Chapter 1:** Introducing the study

## 1.1. Introduction

The personal journey of pre-student teachers as they enter an initial teacher education (ITE) programme and develop towards becoming a teacher can take various paths. For some, it is filled with personal growth, transformative experiences and the discovery of a deep passion for education. For others, a teaching qualification is a programme embarked on by default, a stepping-stone to obtaining a different degree, or a means to another end. However, an intriguing question arises regarding whether pre-service teachers who embark on a journey in ITE with some reservations ever discover a genuine passion and desire to pursue the teaching qualification for its own sake, to become teachers and whether those that start with a desire to teach become disillusioned along the way.

The South African education system needs dedicated and passionate teachers to address the educational challenges faced by the country, which include "the attrition of new teachers joining the profession, teachers' lack of subject knowledge and skills to teach learners" (Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, 2023, p. 60). Over the past years, South African higher education institutions that offer ITE have been experiencing an increase in first-year applications (Moosa, 2020). One of the reasons for this increase includes the availability of funding in the form of merit bursaries such as the Funza Lushaka bursary (Moosa, 2020). However, a research report on the state of South African education recently released by the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (2023) shows that the dropout of student teachers is high, and the time taken to complete teaching degrees is very long. They argue that "part of this challenge is driven by the fact that South Africa is not attracting the right candidates to the teaching profession," therefore there is a need to "improve the sector's ability to identify the right person *by means of screening for not only aptitude but also passion and personality"* (Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, 2023, p. 83, emphasis added).

Rots, Aelterman and Vlerick (2010) argue that there is a relationship between pre-service teachers' initial commitment to teaching and their retention in the teaching profession. Therefore, recruiting suitable candidates may be one strategy to improve the challenge faced by the South African education system (Trevethan, 2023). Due to the increase in applications and perceptions that the right kinds of candidates are not entering teacher preparation programmes, some scholars (e.g., Lubisi, 2012) are recommending that psychometric tests are

useful in admitting students into ITE programmes. This recommendation has been subject to much critique.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

Research in the South African context (e.g., Moosa, 2020; Mwamwenda, 2010) shows that many students are enrolling into ITE programmes reluctantly. Moosa's (2020) study found that "more than half of [pre-service teachers] did not initially want to study teaching" (p. 137), with seven percent of those participants enrolling in ITE programmes by default, having not secured entry into their first choice of degree programme (Moosa, 2020). Concerns have been expressed about the capacity of such students to continue through their degree and to remain in teaching once they qualify.

The views of Oppenheimer Memorial Trust (2023), Heinz (2015), Moosa (2020) and Palo (2018) imply that in the absence of initial commitment and passion, one might be inclined to assume that students entering ITE with reservations may not have the capacity to become passionate and committed teachers. This study critically engages with this widely held assumption in the literature by investigating its validity. It problematizes the linear logic often implied in the assumption above, arguing for a more dynamic, practice-based understanding of the growth of teacher motivation and commitment over time.

Internationally, some researchers (e.g., Berejena, 2022; Al Hashmi & Klasen, 2020) advocate for a range of psychometric and psycho-social approaches such as motivation assessments, personal interviews, behavioural observations and situational judgement tests to assess students' initial commitment to the teaching profession. Al Hashmi and Klasen (2020, p. 196) argue that "measuring prospective teacher's suitability and commitment to the profession as early as possible" indicates students' suitability for teaching. Testing these qualities can help ensure that individuals entering ITE programs have a direct influence on their success as teachers (Al Hashmi & Klasen, 2020). This position assumes that the initial inclination of students towards teaching has lasting implications for their commitment to the profession.

The assumption that long-term professional commitment is dependent on initial motivation has been robustly contested. For example, Trevethan (2023) argues that testing prospective candidates' commitment before they are accepted into the ITE program lacks a solid empirical foundation and "promotes flawed logic" (p. 399); therefore, it may not effectively identify individuals who would become effective teachers. Because "there is no empirical evidence of a correlation between selection practices and effective teaching" (p. 412), the risk of focusing

solely on psychometric selection tests could inadvertently exclude potentially successful candidates from diverse backgrounds, reducing the diversity of successful applicants. Essentially, the emphasis on psychometric testing may exclude individuals with the potential to excel in teaching but who do not perform well on such tests.

Taking a sociological approach to educational practices, this study argues that pre-service teachers do not initially have access to what MacIntyre (2013) calls the "internal goods of the practice" (p. 175). Defining a practice as "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence," (p. 175) MacIntyre defines internal goods as providing the criteria for understanding the logistics of the practice and recognising excellence within the practice. They are not externally imposed arbitrary measures but emerge from participating in the practice itself with increasing levels of expertise. The practice becomes more meaningful to newcomers as one participates in learning and understanding its 'internal goods'.

In this study, it may be that some pre-service teachers initially choose different academic paths but find their passion for teaching *later* through exposure to educational contexts and personal experiences which lead to a deeper knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the goods of the practice. Becoming a 'knower' (Maton, 2013) requires a socialization process where the logistics of the practice are accessed over time. This socialisation happens through interaction with more knowledgeable and experienced others, access to theoretical insights, and learning from experience in practice (Rusznyak, & Bertram, 2021). The question arises whether South African pre-service teachers who enrol in an ITE programme without an initial interest in teaching can ultimately transform into passionate and committed teachers?

### 1.3 Objectives

Using a sociological approach, this research report explored the intentions of pre-service teachers who came into the teaching profession with and without some reservations. It investigated the knowledge they seek and the potential benefits they hoped to derive from obtaining that knowledge and whether their reservations shifted as they interacted with ITE programs and their experiences in practice. Understanding the factors that influence pre-service teachers' intentions and investment in their professional learning is of great importance for preparing teachers. Ramsaroop and Petersen (2020, p. 82) contend that "more nuanced information about students" is required "to inform a multi-pronged approach to student support

that may extend much longer than teacher educators anticipate." Therefore, ITE providers can tailor their curriculum, support systems and mentorship opportunities to better engage and meet the needs of future teachers.

While students may initially enter the teaching profession reluctantly, McIntyre's (2013) work on novices discovering the 'internal goods' as they start to participate in the practice suggests that the possibility for them to develop an understanding and a passion for the practice over time exists. Therefore, this study interrogated the widely held assumption that an initial inclination for teaching leads to long-term commitment, and that those who come into teaching for other reasons are unlikely to become committed, successful teachers. It aimed at problematizing this assumption by investigating whether there have been shifts in how students, who were initially reluctant to become teachers, regard teaching as a desired career option towards the end of their ITE preparation.

### 1.4. Purpose of the study and research questions

The purpose of this study was to interrogate a widely held assumption that an initial intention to teach is an important indicator of long-term commitment, and that students who come into teaching by default are less likely to become committed teachers. I did that by investigating if there were changes in the knowledge's that pre-service teachers seek and the purposes they hoped to derive from obtaining a teaching qualification after being exposed to some of the programs offered by ITE.

**The following research question directed this study:**

*To what extent do students' initial reasons for entering a teacher preparation programme reflect their commitment to teaching later in their studies?*

This question was supported by the following sub-questions:

- What kinds of knowledge do students seek when enrolling in a teacher preparation programme and what benefits do they hope to derive from that knowledge?
- What kinds of knowledge and its benefits do students seek during ITE?
- To what extent do the intentions of preservice teachers shift during their ITE? If so, what accounts for these shifts?

### 1.5. Rationale

By investigating pre-service teachers' intentions, this research intended to contribute an understanding of the factors that influenced their decision-making processes and the extent to which ITE programmes impacted their intentions. The findings of this study are valuable for ITE providers and curriculum developers, by shedding light on the admissions criteria employed for ITE programs. Furthermore, they contribute to understanding the legitimacy of psychometric tests as an early assessment tool in determining long-term commitment and competence in aspiring teachers. Lastly, the research reveals how preparation programmes may shape the way novices understand and invest in the practices they learn.

### 1.6 Context of the study

This study forms part of a cross-sectional, large-scale South Africa research project associated with the *Teacher Choices in Action* module. The Minimum Requirement for Teacher Education Qualification (MRTEQ) policy (DHET, 2015) regulating teacher education in South Africa emphasises the requirement for teachers to acquire a recognised qualification from a higher education institution to be eligible for teaching positions in the country. Before pre-service teachers can qualify, they must spend part of their ITE programme in school-based placements (DHET, 2015). The closure of South African schools during COVID-19-associated lockdown measure posed an unprecedented challenge to institutions offering ITE, and the process of assigning pre-service teachers to schools faced significant challenges.

Teacher education institutions, both nationally and internationally, urgently needed to facilitate practice-based learning opportunities for pre-service teachers that ensured safety while still fostering valuable experiential learning (Rusznyak, 2022). Given that "practical learning must include both learning in practice and learning from practice" (DHET, 2015, p. 10), a group of teacher educators from universities across South Africa collaborated to develop an online teaching augmentation module called *Teacher Choices in Action*. This module facilitated a shift from the traditional approach of 'learning in practice' which "involves teaching in authentic and stimulated classroom environment" (DHET, 2015, p. 10) to the approach of 'learning from practice' which includes "the study of practice, using discursive resources to analyse different practices across variety of contexts, drawing from case studies, video records and lesson observation to theorise practice and form a basis for learning in practice" (DHET, 2015, p. 10).

*Teacher Choices in Action* forms part of the Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme (TLDCIP), which is implemented through a partnership between DHET and the European Union. *Teacher Choices in Action* contained a task that asked student teachers to share their journey into teaching. During the module, pre-service teachers were asked about their reasons for studying teaching, and how they felt about becoming a teacher at the end of their secondary schooling. My research used secondary data obtained from this task. This data provided insights into the perceptions and intentions of students entering teacher education with or without reservations.

### 1.7. My interest in this topic

When I read about the assertion that pre-service teachers without initial intention, cannot become effective and committed teachers, I was very disappointed. Based on my personal experiences, this assertion overlooks the complexity of human motivation and the dynamic nature of personal growth. When I applied for university, I initially had no intention of becoming a teacher. However, my perspective shifted after engaging with certain courses and practical experiences within teacher education programmes. Despite my initial reservations, these experiences transformed my identity and ignited a deep passion for teaching. Therefore, this topic is interesting to me because it recognises that not everyone enters the teaching field with a predefined intention or lifelong aspiration. It acknowledges that individuals may embark on different career paths before discovering their true calling in teaching. Exploring these journeys allowed me to gain insights into diverse pathways that lead individuals to pursue a teaching career and the pivotal moments that develop their insight and ignite their passion. I was interested in finding out whether experiences during teacher preparation programmes can shift the benefits that students seek to derive from a career in teaching.

### 1.8 Outline of the study

This research report consists of ten chapters:

Chapter 1 has introduced the study. The problem statement, research question and rationale for the study arise from the problem identified in the introduction.

Chapter 2 focuses on the literature relevant to this study. I explore the debates around whether initial motivations lead to long-term commitment in the teaching profession.

Chapter 3 presents the conceptual and analytical framework for this study. I introduce Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) concepts, and I use autonomy shifts as a conceptual and analytic framework for analysing change in students' motives.

Chapter 4 focuses on the research methodologies used in this study. Its describe and account for the research paradigm, how participants were chosen, and how data was analysed. It then discusses ethical research practice, reliability, and validity and how I considered such concerns.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of this study, especially the knowledge and benefits students seek upon entry into ITE.

Chapter 6 presents the findings on the knowledge and benefits students seek during and after their teacher preparation. It analyses whether there were shifts or not in their motivations and then looks at the mechanism that caused the shifts.

Chapter 7 presents a discussion of the findings.

Chapter 8 concludes the research, highlighting the major claims made by the research regarding whether initial motivations lead to long-term commitment in the teaching profession and their implications for future research in ITE.

# **Chapter 2:** Literature Review

## 2.1. Introduction

In this chapter, I start by recapping the main debates around the issue of whether initial motivations lead to long term commitment in the teaching profession or not. Then, I do a comparative analysis of six studies - local and international - that investigated the motivations of students in registering for ITE programmes. I then do another comparative analysis of five studies that investigates the impact of ITE on students' beliefs, attitudes and ways of thinking. Finally, I identify the literature gap for a study on shifts in the perceived benefits, processes and interventions that play a role in the journeys of a range of students who enter ITE programmes.

## 2.2. Choosing to teach

There is an ongoing debate regarding what it takes to be a competent and committed teacher and whether those qualities exist before enrolling for ITE programmes or whether these attributes develop through a socialisation process as students learn to participate in the practice. On one hand, proponents of a psychological constructivist view (e.g., Moosa, 2020; Heinz, 2015) argue that teaching is an individual journey driven by internal motivation, asserting that students' initial motivation has long-lasting implications for their commitment to the profession. This implies that students who enter teaching with high motivation levels are more likely to remain committed to their careers over time. In this view, changes are attributed to internally driven changes in attitude (Kacaniku, Maderbacher, Erhard & Saqipip, 2022).

On the other hand, some argue that teaching is also a socially constructed practice and understanding it involves learning relevant bodies of knowledge, ways of thinking, and understanding its underlying principles and engaging with a community of practitioners (e.g., Rusznyak & Bertram, 2021; Morrow, 2007). According to this viewpoint, pre-service teachers acquire knowledge about the practice through interactions with different bodies of knowledge offered by ITE provider, including readings, tutorial activities, practitioners and significant others (Rusznyak & Bertram, 2021). This implies that students' relationship with the practice is shaped by the continuous interactions between themselves, their learning and experience, and no conclusions about long-term commitment can be derived from their initial motivations and reasons for entering an ITE programme. Therefore, through active "participation in the practice" and interacting with others, pre-service teachers can ultimately discover the logics of

the practice and the "internal goods" (MacIntyre, 2013, p. 175) of teaching. Given these two perspectives, a review of both bodies of literature follow:

### 2.3 Initial motivation of students in teacher preparation programmes

In this section, a comparative analysis of six studies that investigated the reasons why students enter teacher education is presented, comparing their purposes, research methodologies, participants, theoretical frameworks and findings. For this review, countries were selected based on the availability of recent, peer-reviewed literature that directly examines pre-service teachers' motivations and offers comparative insight into differing socio-economic and educational contexts. The selection aimed to represent a mix of developed and developing education systems. While South Africa is included as a key African context, the limited representation of other African countries reflects a relative scarcity of accessible and up-to-date research on this specific topic within the region.

#### 2.3.1 Purposes of the studies that research teacher's motivations

A range of concerns related to teacher recruitment, retention, and attrition have led to research that focuses its attention on the motivations held by pre-service teachers upon entering their teacher education programs. Internationally and South African studies have examined the factors that drive students to pursue teaching careers. Research on this topic spans various countries, including South Africa (Moosa, 2020), Sweden (Bergmark, Lundström, Manderstedt & Palo, 2018), the Netherlands (Simonsz, Leeman, & Veugelers, 2023), the United States of America (Kwok, Rios, & Kwok, 2022), Scotland (Wang, Wang & Lin, 2023) and Australia (Manuel & Hughes, 2006).

Moosa (2020) and Bergmark et al. (2018) assert that such studies are necessary to understand patterns of teacher retention and attrition. Moosa (2020, p. 132) emphasizes that "understanding students' motives for choosing teaching as a career is an important educational inquiry that will have implications for the retention of teachers in the profession," highlighting the link between initial career intent and long-term professional commitment. Similarly, Bergmark et al. (2020) advocate that "increased knowledge on the motives of student teachers can contribute positively to completion of teacher education and teacher retention in the future" (p. 278). Both studies argue that understanding what inspires individuals to enter the teaching profession and how they perceive it as a career choice could be relevant and beneficial in addressing concerns about attracting and retaining qualified teachers and aiding ITE institutes in supporting pre-service teachers to complete their qualifications and remain in the profession.

In countries like the Netherlands, United State of America, Scotland, and Australia where ITE programs face challenges related to low enrolment and high attrition, the analysis of pre-service teachers' motivations for entering the profession is driven by concerns about "teacher shortages and current concerns regarding the broader social ends of education" (Simonsz et al., 2023, p. 207). Consequently, Manuel and Hughes (2006) and Wang et al. (2023) argue that examining student teachers' motivations is crucial for uncovering the driving force behind pre-service teachers' initial career choices and informing aspects of teacher recruitment to address shortages. Furthermore, Mwamwenda's (2010) underscores the importance of understanding motivations to "market teaching as an appealing job among young people" (p. 14), given the profession's reliance on recruiting new members to replace those who resign, are dismissed, or retire.

In contrast to the global concern over teacher shortages, South Africa faces a contrasting issue: an oversupply of pre-service teachers. Moosa (2020, p. 130) argues that our ITE providers are "currently experiencing an annual increase in admissions of first-year students," raising concerns about the imbalance between the growing number of teacher candidates and the limited availability of teaching posts. This divergence suggests that, unlike global efforts focused on attracting more candidates into teaching, South Africa must grapple with managing admission demands in a saturated employment market. Trevethan (2022) argues that recruiting highly capable candidates may be one strategy to address this challenge. In support to more selective admissions, scholars such as Lubisi (2012) advocate for the use of psychometric tests in admitting students into teacher education programs, while Kwok et al. (2022) suggest that studying teachers' initial motivations is essential for teacher education institutions to use as admission criteria to identify potential teacher education applicants.

These studies highlight the global significance of investigating pre-service teacher motivations, for addressing issues of recruitment and also for enhancing the quality and relevance of teacher education. Whether in contexts of scarcity or surplus, a critical understanding of what draws individuals to teaching remains central to the sustainability and effectiveness of the profession.

### 2.3.2 Participants and the research methodologies

This section unpacks the participants that were used to conduct these studies and the research methodologies that were applied to collect the data for the six studies, offering insight into how different data collection strategies have shaped understandings of pre-service teachers' motivations for entering the profession. Moosa (2020), Bergmark et al. (2018), Simonsz et al.

(2023), Kwok et al. (2022), Wang et al. (2023) and Manuel and Hughes (2006) used a range of methodologies to collect data on why students have opted to study teaching. Qualitative methods were employed in three of the studies (Bergmark et al. 2020; Wang & Lin, 2023; Kwok et al. 2022) because to "gain a more comprehensive picture of teacher motivation, research methods should be extended beyond numerical data to involve a full range of data collection such as observation and interviews" (Han & Yin, 2016, p. 13). Only two studies used mixed methods (Moosa, 2020; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). They argue that using both the qualitative and quantitative "strengthened the reliability of data and the validity of their findings and enabled triangulation" (Moosa, 2020, p. 134). Participants in these studies consisted of first-year pre-service teachers pursuing their teaching qualifications at various institutions, reflecting a focus on the formative stages of professional identity development

Data was collected differently across the studies. These include systematic reviews (Heinz, 2015), narrative essays and closed-ended questions (Moosa, 2020), surveys (Kwok et al., 2022), written narratives (Bergmark et al., 2018) questionnaires (Simonsz et al., 2023), multiple-choice questions (Manuel and Hughes, 2006) and open-ended essays (Kwok et al., 2022). This diversity in data collection tools is not merely procedural but reflects an intentional strategy to address the multifaceted nature of the research question. Simonsz et al., (2023) note that the use of varied methods generates a more comprehensive understanding of pre-service teacher motivation, ensuring that both subjective experiences and measurable trends are considered.

### 2.3.3 Theories used to research teacher motivation

This section unpacks the theoretical frameworks applied to interpret the data for the six studies. In trying to understand the behaviours and intensions of pre-service teachers, most of the cited studies adopted the 'expectancy-value theory', a This psychological theoretical framework suggests that "individuals are motivated by their personal values and the expectation that particular choices will fulfil those values" (Moosa, 2020, p. 133). As a result, these expectations will influence the decisions of pre-service teachers to pursue teaching careers. From a sociological perspective, such an approach tends to foreground personal agency while underemphasizing the broader sociocultural interactions and institutional structures that shape pre-service teachers' motivations and choices.

The widespread application of the Factors Influencing Teaching (FIT) choice model in four of these studies (Moosa, 2020; Wang & Lin, 2023; Manuel and Hughes, 2006; Simonsz et al.,

2023) further reinforces this psychological framing by categorising motivations into three groups: intrinsic, altruistic, and extrinsic motives. The FTI-choice model is a model used to integrate critical motivational factors contributing to the choice of teaching as a career. Kwok et al. (2022) argue that this scale facilitates comprehension and interpretation of the factors affecting pre-service teachers' career decisions, thereby influencing their dedication to the profession. While this model offers clarity and comparability, it also risks reducing complex, contextually embedded experiences into neat typologies.

In contrast, the research by Bergmark et al. (2018) which employed 'discourse theory' as a theoretical framework to analyse their findings provide a more critical and relational lens. Bergmark et al. (2018) assert that within this framework, the prevailing discursive power dynamics influence professional identity formation. Unlike the Expectancy-value theory, individuals' career decisions are intertwined with various identities that may impact their commitment to the profession. Moreover, the authors of this research did not solely classify pre-service teacher motivations; they did not use pre-established categories, instead remaining open to students' motives in their investigation, resulting in a more intricate depiction emerging (Bergmark et al., 2018).

The overreliance on psychological models in the literature points to notable gap: the lack of sociologically informed analyses that critically examine how autonomy, motivation and professional identity are co-produced within specific institutional contexts. The current research addresses this gap by investigating autonomy shifts in pre-service teachers' narratives through a sociological lens. This approach both challenges the assumptions of rational, value-driven choice and also illuminates the contested and evolving nature of becoming a teacher in contemporary education systems.

### 2.3.4 Findings of studies on the motivations of pre-service teachers

This section unpacks the findings of the six studies reviewed. While these studies employ slightly different methodological approaches to examine the motivations prompting pre-service teachers to pursue teaching qualifications, they collectively uncover analogous results. They highlight three primary motivations driving pre-service teachers to enter the profession: altruism, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation (Moosa, 2020; Simonsz, et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Manuel & Hughes, 2006; Kwok et al., 2022; Mwamwenda, 2010; Bergmark et al., 2018). Simonsz et al. (2023) introduce subject matter interest motivation to address its

absence in the FIT-choice model. This addition reflects a growing recognition that motivation is not only multifaceted but also context-sensitive.

These motives differ from context to context. In South Africa, intrinsic motives are ranked lowest (Moosa, 2020; Mwamwenda, 2010), suggesting that structural or economic conditions may overshadow internal drives. In contrast, intrinsic and altruistic motivations are more prevalent in countries like Sweden, the Netherlands, the United State of America, Scotland, and Australia (Kwok et al., 2022; Bergmark et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2023). In these countries, pre-service teachers are often driven by a passion for the profession, a sense of calling, or a desire to make a societal contribution. They tend to view "extrinsic rewards as a 'bonus' rather than the core entry motivations for teaching" (Wang et al., 2023, p. 202) or as a "complementary" (Bergmark et al., 2018, p.279). In Kwok et al.'s (2022) study "there was an absence of extrinsic motivations such as pay, holidays, or job security" (p. 593).

### 2.3.5 Critiques of studies that investigate Initial motivations of students in ITE programmes

What is common between these six studies is that they all take a psychological approach to investigate issues of teacher retention and attrition, resting on the assumption that the initial motivations of students have a long-term impact on their professional commitment later. These studies generally frame motivation as a stable psychological trait, often linked to long-term commitment to the profession. For example, Kwok et al. (2022, p. 576) argue that "teacher motivation is an important factor for entry and persistence in the profession." These scholars assert that these psychological characteristics form the foundation of teachers' aspirations to pursue a career in education and can serve as a source of an ongoing commitment to the profession (Kwok et al., 2022).

Moosa (2020) also align with this perspective, contending that students motivated by intrinsic factors tend to be more committed to the teaching profession because they feel a sense of belonging. Those whose are motivated by altruistic motives are also likely to stay in the profession because of their desire to bring about change in the lives of their learners (Kwok et al., 2022). However, those who choose teaching because of extrinsic motives may undermine a long-term commitment to teaching when they realize the realities of the profession's demands. These teachers could be easily encouraged to exit the profession if their expectations and needs are not met "this could lead to high drop-out probability" (Moosa, 2020, p. 137).

The assumption that initial motivation has long-term effects has led researchers to suggest psychometric assessments for deciding who is suitable for teaching upfront (e.g., Al Hashmi & Klassen, 2020). According to Al Hashmi and Klasen (2020) some people are more suited to teaching than others and ITE providers should screen out unsuitable people before entry. This approach recognizes the importance of attracting genuinely interested individuals who are passionate about teaching, as it is believed that such students are more likely to excel in their studies and ultimately become effective teachers. By assessing students' initial commitment to the teaching profession, universities can potentially identify those with a strong sense of purpose, a genuine desire to make a difference in students' lives and a long-term commitment to the field.

However, this line of reasoning rests on problematic assumptions. None of the studies consider the possibility that motivations may evolve over time. As pre-service teachers engage in ITE programmes, they acquire new perspectives, priorities, and modes of thought and behaviour through their newly acquired knowledge, skills, and experiences they acquire. In support of this view, Trevethan (2022) offers a strong conceptual critique of selection-based entry polices in New Zealand, arguing that these rely on "unfounded assumptions and political sensitivities rather than empirical research" (p. 2). She challenges the widespread reliance on academic performance and dispositional measures as reliable predictors of teaching effectiveness, noting that "test scores are neither a measure nor a predictor of effective teaching" (p. 4). Her used of the term "the bright person myth" (p. 5) underscores the flawed belief that cognitive ability alone determines teacher quality. Additionally, she argues that "the evidence that links literacy and numeracy test results on selection with effective teaching after graduation is hard to find" (Trevethan, 2022, p. 4).

Trevethan (2022) also considers selections based on suitable dispositions. Her concern lies with the overall consistency that the grounds of using disposition are unproven, unreliable and invalid. The term "disposition to teach" is, as she notes "fraught with uncertainty and challenge' because disposition to teach "is a term that means different things to different people'' (p. 6). Because "assessing dispositions for teaching as part of selection has no valid evidence base" (p. 6), due to this lack of clarity around what makes a good teacher "some applicants may be unfairly excluded from entry to teacher education, potentially reducing diversity in intakes to ITE programmes" (p. 6).

Empirical evidence from South Africa further problematizes the assumptions behind selection-based approaches. Shalem, Dison, and Reed (2013), in their analysis of 490 first-year ITE students, found that neither National Senior Certificate (NSC) results nor National Benchmark Test (NBT) scores were strong predictors of academic success in the first year of teacher education. This finding casts further doubt on the predictive power of pre-entry academic measures and supports Trevethan's (2022) call for a more holistic and longitudinal approach to assessing suitability for teaching.

Together, these critiques suggest a critical shift in thinking is needed—away from front-loaded selection based on fixed traits and toward ongoing, incremental professional learning of pre-service teachers within ITE programs. Such an approach acknowledges the developmental nature of teaching identity and allows institutions to base judgments on actual performance, engagement, and growth. As Trevethan (2022, p. 14) argues, "rigorous assessment during the ITE program" informed by academic achievement, participation, professional behavior, and classroom competence provides a more accurate and just evaluation of a candidate's potential. This move could help ITE providers better support retention and effectiveness by responding to who pre-service teachers *become*, not just who they *appear* to be at the point of entry.

### 2.3.6 Summary

Trevethan's (2022) argument suggests that using upfront aptitude and aspirational testing is an unreliable predictor of success in an initial teacher education programme. Especially as pre-service teachers are inducted into ITE programmes whereby they develop new insights, new priorities and new ways of thinking and being through the knowledge, skills and experiences they gain. Consequently, motivations may not depend on whether students will sustain their commitment to the teaching profession. Next, I take a sociological perspective on student's motivations and look at the influence of teacher education on pre-service teacher's initial motivations.

## 2.4. Change and stability in motivation during/ after ITE

Internationally and in South Africa, there is a lack of empirical studies examining the changes in the motivation of student teachers during and after their ITE. As I have argued above, most existing studies focus solely on the initial motivations of pre-service teachers, making assumptions about their commitment to the practice. This approach overlooks the possibility that initial motivations can evolve as pre-service teachers engage with some of the programs offered by ITE providers. This section examines the effects of teacher education on pre-service

teachers' developing practices and how the experiences and learning within ITE programs may impact pre-service teachers' teaching practices beyond their initial entry into the profession.

Various researchers (e.g., Moses, Admiral; Berry & Saab, 2021; Ronessa & Smith, 2010) agree that ITE can be both a good and a negative platform for growing and altering teachers' commitment to teaching. Moses et al. (2021) argue that courses and programs offered by ITE providers are crucial in helping pre-service teachers build their commitment to teaching and a sense of what it means to be a teacher. The connections between the course's theoretical and practical components, as well as the student teachers' experiences on campus and in schools, all have an impact on the pre-service teachers' dedication to teaching (Moses et al., 2021).

### 2.4.1 Purposes of the studies

Five international studies on this topic were reviewed: four empirical studies and one literature review. These studies were done in Scotland (Johnston, 2010), the Netherlands (Moses et al., 2021), Malawi (Mtika, 2011), Norway (Ronessa & Smith, 2010) and Hong Kong (Tang, Cheng & Cheng, 2014).

Although the geographical contexts vary, these studies converge on a key concern which is how different elements of ITE shape pre-service teachers' motivation, commitment and sense of professional autonomy. Mtika (2011) and Johnston (2010) looked at the impacts of the teaching practicum on pre-service teachers' motivations to become teachers. Based on the argument that the teaching practicum is essential to the professional education of pre-service teachers, Johnston (2010, p. 308) "[highlighted] the complex and problematic nature of the school as a site for early professional learning by questioning assumptions about its innate usefulness." On the other hand, Ronessa and Smith (2010) and Tang et al. (2014) investigated the effect of coursework in ITE programmes in generating and altering pre-service teachers' commitment to teaching. Contrastingly, Moses et al. (2021) conducted a literature review investigating the underlying themes of teacher education that influence student teacher's commitment to teaching.

Collectively, these studies offer a layered understanding of how identity is constructed within and across different ITE environments. Rather than viewing motivation and commitment as static outcomes, this body of literature suggests they are fluid and contextually negotiated. This insight aligns closely with the current research's narrative focus on pre-service teachers' evolving autonomy.

### 2.4.2 Participants and research methodologies

Participants in these studies included student teachers from different institutions that offer ITE. These studies employed different methodological strategies to collect data, including thematic review (Moses et al., 2021), written reports and learning logs (Johnston, 2010), semi-structured audio-recorded interviews (Mtika, 2011) and questionnaires (Ronessa & Smith, 2010). Four of the studies (Moses et al., 2021; Mtika, 2011; Johnston, 2010; Tang et al., 2014) were cross-sectional and qualitative in nature and used thematic analysis to cluster data. One study (Ronessa & Smith, 2010) was a longitudinal quantitative study. They argue that "the advantage of this quantitative approach is that we are able to follow all the students over a long period, which again makes it possible to follow the developmental process among the students" (p. 174). In this study, pre-service teachers were given a questionnaire to complete, and the data was analysed using the mean score and the standard deviation.

### 2.4.3 Finding of the studies

Although findings are slightly different from these studies because of how these researchers categorised their data, they show similar themes or trends. It is evident from these studies that ITE can play a crucial role in the stability and shifts in motivations of pre-service teachers during their preparation. It can also play a role in changing pre-service teachers' identities over time. In their review, Moses et al. (2021) found that a well-structured and organised ITE programme can enable pre-service teachers to understand how concepts are connected and related across the curriculum, what aspects of teaching are crucial and how they should fit together. In contrast, Johnston (2010) argues that experiences in teacher education can also have negative effects even for individuals who were initially committed to the profession. Mtika (2011, p. 552) argues that if ITE is "poorly designed, it can contribute to teachers leaving, it may also discourage prospective trainee teachers from entering teacher education in the first place."

In South Africa, ITE is divided into two components 'campus-based' and 'school-based' experiences. According to Moses et al. (2021), these components can potentially have both negative and/or positive influences on pre-service teacher's initial motivations. For example, Tang et al. (2014) found that there have been considerable adjustments in motivation and a shifting sense of self-as-teacher in pre-service teachers after four years of study in the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme. While some participants began with a sense of ambivalence and showed a positive shift in motivation, others showed a negative shift in teaching motivation, which ended with a sense of ambivalence (Tang et al., 2014).

On the other hand, Johnston (2010) found that the degree of interaction between pre-service teachers, learners and staff members during the pre-service teachers' school placement influenced their commitment to teaching. Similar to Malawi, Mtika (2011) also found that pre-service teachers undergo varied and often challenging experiences during teaching practicum. Johnston (2010) argues that feeling marginalised, unwelcomed and undervalued in the schools where pre-service teachers are placed has an impact on their confidence and self-efficacy, as this makes them less able to establish loyalty and devotion to the school's principles. However, pre-service teachers tend to have a deeper dedication to teaching when they obtain the right support from mentors or cooperating teachers throughout their teaching practicum (Mtika, 2011).

Another similar important finding from Moses et al. (2021) and Mtika (2011) is the connection between theory and practice. Mtika (2011, p. 533) found that pre-service teachers usually "grapple with the apparent gap between theory and practice across different contexts of teacher education." Moses et al. (2021, p. 86) also found that "when student teachers are able to apply theories learned during their courses, they positively evaluate their university courses as relevant." However, if pre-service teachers were unable to see a link between theory and practice, decreased motivation and commitment resulted. Therefore, in terms of retention and attrition, Moses et al. (2021) suggest that ITE should develop a curriculum that is organised as a coherent whole in a way that helps student teachers see how ideas are connected and related across the curriculum, what aspects of teaching are important, and how they are supposed to fit together.

In contrast to these studies, Ronessa and Smith (2010, p. 182) found that "teacher education courses does not harm the motivation of future teachers, but nor does it strengthen it," revealing that for the participants in their study, the "motivation for teaching seems to be relatively stable during a one-year teacher education course." There was stability in the motivation of Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) pre-service teachers upon completion of their teacher education programs. This finding suggests that while ITE can play a crucial part in changing or stabilising motivations, there also may be no shift in pre-service teachers who entered teaching with some reservations after being exposed to programs offered by ITE.

These studies collectively show that ITE can be a site of transformation, stagnation, or even disillusionment, depending on its design, delivery, and the relational and contextual factors at play. This study builds on this body of work by exploring how pre-service teachers in the South

African context narrate their shifting sense of autonomy and identity, offering situated understanding of how broader patterns identified in international literature manifests locally.

### 2.4.4 Summary

The literature I have reviewed above is relevant to my study as it provides an understanding of the broader context of teacher education and the role it plays in shaping pre-service teachers' professional development. These studies suggest that ITE may impact students who enter an ITE programme with some reservations. These pre-service teachers' initial reservations towards teaching may be influenced and transformed through their participation in ITE. I now look at what the reviewed literature does not explore thereby carving my literature gap.

## 2. 5. Literature Gap

In this literature review, I have shown that the majority of studies in analysing the motivations of students enrolling for teaching have adopted a psychological lens. Many of these studies look at what motivates students to choose teaching, and they are useful because they shed light on the factors that contribute to teacher satisfaction and commitment. This knowledge can guide the development of supportive policies, professional development opportunities and work environments that meet pre-service teachers' needs, thereby improving retention rates.

However, many of these studies pay little attention to what happens to pre-service teachers after they have been exposed to learning opportunities offered by teacher education and have assumed that initial motivation has long-term impact on commitment. There is need to supplement the findings from these studies with a sociological perspective in how teacher preparation programmes might work to shape the gaze of students as they learn about the practice of teaching and start to acquire its inner goods. If teacher aspirations are fixed, South African teacher education institutes may consider admitting students into teacher education programs based on their initial commitment to the profession. However, if teacher aspirations are not fixed and is constantly changing then the physiological approach of using entry tests and personal interviews may underestimate the role that teacher education may have in forming pre-service teachers' identities. This research project aimed at filling this gap by using a sociological approach to investigate the impact of teacher preparation programmes on pre-service teachers who entered ITE reluctantly and those who had no reservation. This study investigated whether there have been any shifts in the benefits they perceive of obtaining a teaching qualification.

# **Chapter 3:** Conceptual and analytic framework

## 3.1. Introduction

This study investigated whether empirical evidence supports a widely held assumption that students' initial understanding and motivation to study teaching necessarily determine their long-term commitment. When students enrol in an ITE qualification, they sign up to learn the knowledge and skills offered by the curriculum. This study assumed that they do so to derive some benefit from acquiring that knowledge. The concepts and tools of Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) (Maton, 2014) were useful to analyse what knowledge participants seek from a teacher qualification, and how this relates to the benefits they expect from acquiring that knowledge. In this section, I introduce LCT and how its Autonomy dimension was useful for analysing data in my study.

## 3.2. Socialisation and the internal good of a practice

According to MacIntyre (2013), a practice is a "coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity" (p. 175). MacIntyre (2013) argues that practices are essential for humans to flourish because they give individuals a sense of identity, purpose and belonging. Engaging in a practice allows individuals to develop skills, cultivate virtues and participate meaningfully in a community. The more they learn about the practice and gain experience from participating in its activities, the deeper understanding they build of that practice's "internal goods;", that is, its logic and the satisfaction gained from achieving excellence and innovation (MacIntyre, 2013).

When engaging in a specific practice, individuals undergo socialisation and educational processes of acquiring knowledge, skills and understandings associated with that practice. In relation to the teaching practice, this process typically involves interactions with 'significant others,' who include more knowledgeable individuals already familiar with and experienced in the practice (Rusznyak & Bertram, 2021). Through such interactions, social actors potentially learn the practice's explicit rules and techniques and implicit norms, values and meanings embedded within it. They gain insights into the underlying principles, goals, and desired outcomes of the practice, which shape their understanding of what matters and how to engage meaningfully within that domain (MacIntyre, 2013).

In ITE, significant others such as lecturers, mentors and peers play a crucial role in this learning process of pre-service teachers. By observing and interacting with significant others, they internalize the knowledge, attitudes and perspectives that are valued within the teaching

practice (Rusznyak, & Bertram, 2021). They learn to recognise and appreciate what is considered important, relevant and appropriate within that particular social context. As social actors actively engage in the practice and interact with others, they gradually become participants themselves (MacIntyre, 2013). This involvement allows them to develop a first-hand understanding of the challenges, complexities, and dynamics involved in the practice. Through repeated interactions and experiences, they refine their skills, expand their knowledge base and cultivate a deeper appreciation for the nuances and intricacies of the practice.

This sociological approach was important for my study as it assumes that teaching is not merely a set of isolated actions or skills learned through personal experience, but a complex practice with socially patterned activities. To learn a practice, one starts to participate in its activities. Through participation and interactions, newcomers start to gain a deeper understanding of its logics and what excellence looks like in practice. MacIntyre (2013) refers to this as gaining access to its "internal goods" (p. 175). According to this viewpoint, the initial motivation of students entering a teacher education program will not likely to endure over the long term. Instead, the focus shifts to whether the students can discover the intrinsic benefits or 'internal goods' during their preparation program, as this discovery may have a more substantial and lasting influence on their future.

### 3.3. LCT: A conceptual and analytic framework for analysing change

Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) is a sociological approach used to analyse and shape knowledge practices (Maton, 2014). LCT offers a multidimensional framework that offers tools for analyzing knowledge, practices and how these are enacted by different groups of social actors over time. It has realist toots based on the idea that "there is more to what we say or do than what we say or do" (Maton, 2018, p. 28). Practices hold more significance than just their focus or content; they also serve as 'languages of legitimation' or codes that reveal how participation and success in a practice are understood and recognized (Maton, 2018). LCT has several dimensions, including Specialization, Semantics and Autonomy that offer insights into different aspects of practices. Each one has two organizing principles that generate codes that legitimate a practice (Maton, 2018).

The Autonomy dimension of LCT is based on the premise that "any set of practices comprises constituents that are related together in particular ways" (Maton, 2018, p. 28). It enables the exploration of what is distinctive about a practice and how it relates to other practices (Maton, 2018). Autonomy has been largely used to understand the core of practices and how different

practices can be successfully integrated. For example, Maton and Howard (2018) explored how mathematics is successfully integrated into the learning of school science, and Locke (2019) used Autonomy to explore how vocational educators experience marketization reforms. In this study, I used Autonomy to track any shifts in what knowledge students seek when enrolling for a teaching qualification and the benefits they expect to derive from getting that knowledge. Autonomy's organizing principles of *positional autonomy* (PA) and *relational autonomy* (RA) are useful in analysing the knowledge and benefits pre-service teachers seek as they undertake an initial teaching qualification.

*Positional autonomy* (PA) considers how strongly constituents of a practice are insulated from constituents that come from elsewhere. In this study, this manifests as the extent to which the knowledge included in an ITE curriculum is separated from knowledge included in other kinds of curricula. A *stronger positional autonomy* (PA+) is enacted when students seek the unique knowledge that is only offered in a teaching qualification, and weaker (PA–) is enacted when they seek knowledge that can also be offered by other qualifications. For example, a student who registers for a teaching degree because they are seeking knowledge about pedagogy enacts a stronger PA than one who seeks pure mathematical knowledge. A student seeking knowledge about engineering enacts a much *weaker positional autonomy* (PA–) than either of them.

Table 3.1: Indicators showing how different strengths of *positional autonomy* (PA) will be recognised in the empirical data.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *stronger* ↕ *weaker* | *PA++* | ***knowledge about teaching*** | *knowledge to teach something specific and/or to specific learners* | *"What actually lead me to enrol for teaching is the interest I have in the subject knowledge 'Mathematics".* |
| | *PA+* | | *knowledge about teaching generally* | *"I want to be part of those people who are ladders or rather stepping stones for learners to reach their goals and be successful through sharing knowledge with them".* |
| | *PA–* | ***knowledge about anything else*** | *knowledge from other disciplines that is included in a teaching qualification* | *Back in high school I knew that the career path I will follow will be related to Mass communication however I was not sure if I will be a teacher.* |
| | *PA––* | | *Not seeking knowledge, OR seeking knowledge from an unrelated qualification* | *"I never considered teaching as a career I want to pursue when I pass my matric, I wanted to be an accountant".* |

The second organizing principle, *relational autonomy* (RA), looks at how strong the boundaries are between the ways of relating from within a practice compared to those that arise from other practices. In this study, relational autonomy refers to the benefits that students hope to derive from the knowledge they seek in a teaching qualification. When the benefits derived come specifically from participating in the practices of teaching, they have a stronger relational autonomy (RA+). For example, deriving satisfaction from seeing learners understand a complex mathematical concept is an 'internal good' that can only be derived from the interactions in a teaching/learning context. Benefits that may be derived from teaching but could also be obtained from other practices would enact weaker relational autonomy (RA–). These include job security, status from a university qualification or respect from one's community. A student who derives satisfaction from seeing children learn mathematics, enacts a stronger RA than one whose primary purpose of obtaining a teaching qualification is to get status from a university degree. The weakest relational autonomy would be those benefits that cannot be derived from teaching.

Table 3.2: Indicators showing how different strengths of *relational autonomy* will be coded.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *stronger* ↕ *weaker* | *RA++* | ***Benefits that can only be derived from teaching*** | *From direct experience of teaching interactions* ***(Participating in the practice)*** | *"I felt good about teaching other fellow learners who were struggling in particular subjects like Geography".* |
| | *RA+* | | *From participating in / contributing to the education system* ***(Contribution to the practice)*** | *" My hope is to get every learner in South Africa to get the importance of being educated".* |
| | *RA–* | ***Benefits that may be derived from other practices*** | *From a changed social position in society* ***(Recognition from the position)*** | *"I wanted to become a role model to my siblings and other people in my society"* |
| | *RA––* | | *From a changed material position in society or anything else* | *"I love the fact that you cannot sit at home with your qualification because there are many job opportunities".* |

The different strengths of positional autonomy and relational autonomy come together to reveal the basis of legitimacy of what students seek and value when they pursue a teaching qualification. The basis of legitimacy is generated by autonomy codes, as shown in Figure 3.1.

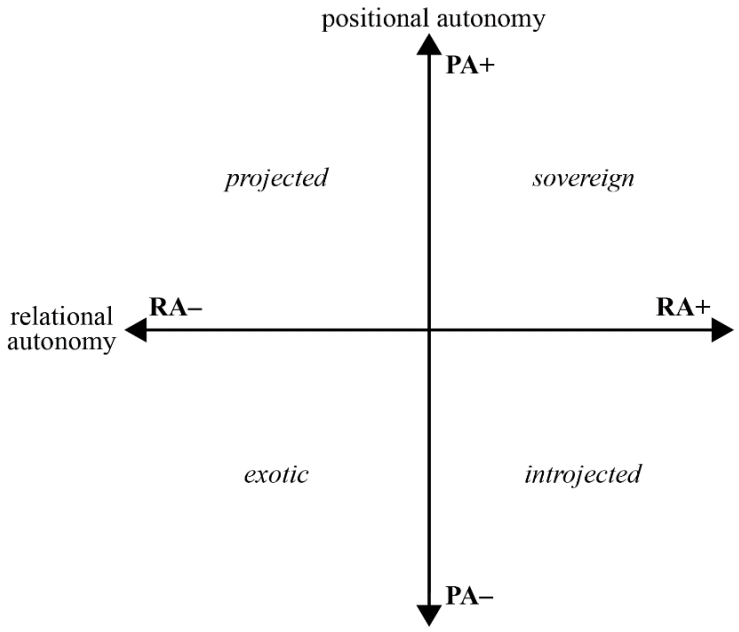



Figure 3.1: Autonomy plane showing how relative strengths of positional autonomy and relational autonomy give rise to four autonomy codes (reproduced from Maton, 2018 p. 6).

Analytically, different strengths of positional autonomy and relational autonomy give rise to four autonomy codes, where each occupies a different quadrant of the autonomy plane. They are:

- *sovereign codes* (PA+, RA+) govern situations where students seek knowledge from an ITE qualification to seek benefits internal to the practice of teaching.
- *projected codes* (PA+, RA–) occur when students seek knowledge from an ITE degree for purposes unrelated to the work of teachers within the education system.
- *introjected codes* (PA–, RA+) govern situations where a student seeks benefits derived from the practices of teaching but through means other than an initial teacher education qualification.
- *exotic codes* (PA–, RA–) govern situations where the student is not seeking an ITE qualification, nor seeking benefits associated with the internal goods of the practice.

Using tools from Autonomy, I was able to analyse how students legitimise their pursuit of a teaching qualification shifts over time. Shifts in relative strengths of PA and RA can be plotted as pathways between different positions on the autonomy plane, as illustrated in Figure 3.2.

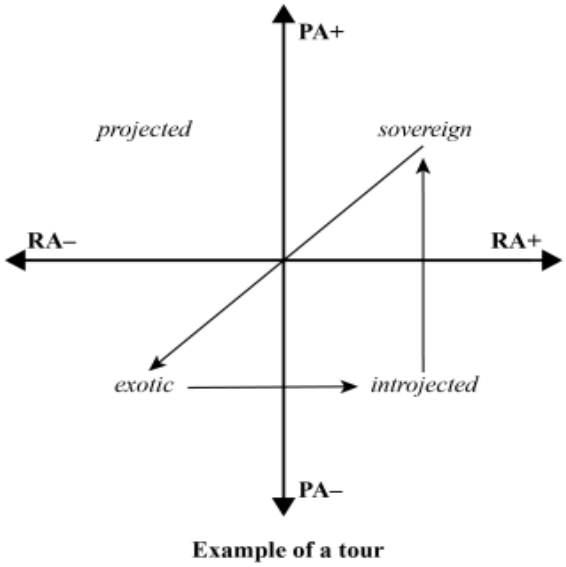



Figure 3.2: Example of a pathway showing shifts between three positions on the autonomy plane over time (Maton, 2018, p. 9).

In this study, shifts in students' position on the autonomy plane represent changes in the knowledge they seek and/or the benefits they hope to derive from completing a teaching qualification. Participants who came into ITE without reservation, where they were looking for knowledge to teach a specific subject to specific leaners, started at the *sovereign code* (PA+, RA+), seeking knowledge for teaching for the purposes of accessing its internal goods. However, those who came with reservation or wanted to study teaching as a means to another career, started either at the *exotic code* (PA–, RA–), *introjected code* (PA–, RA+) or *projected code* (PA+, RA–), where the knowledge they seek or the benefits they hope to derive are not necessarily related to the internal goods of teaching.

This study assumed that during their ITE, there are possibilities of strengthening positional autonomy where they start seeking knowledge for teaching or weakening of positional autonomy if they become interested in other kinds of knowledge. There are also possibilities of strengthening relational autonomy if they start to gain satisfaction through their experiences in the classroom, weakening RA when other benefits unrelated to the teaching profession become more significant. Through the strengthening and/or weakening of PA and RA, students

may move from one code to another over time. If the autonomy codes do not change over time, participants initially started their ITE in one of the autonomy codes and remained at that specific code at the time of this study. However, if codes shift, a participant started their journey from one of the codes and, through experiences with ITE moved from that code to another different code. I was interested in establishing the initial positions of students on the autonomy plane, if this and how changes over time, and finally, what accounts for the shifts that are revealed.

Through the combination of MacIntyre's philosophical framework and LCT's analytic tools, the study was able to trace how participants shifted in their motivations and knowledge-seeking behaviours. Whether through increased participations in teaching activities, positive or negative feedback from mentors, or critical moments of realisation during practicum.

# **Chapter 4:** Research Methodology

In this chapter, I discuss the rationale for the research design used to conduct this study. To investigate how pre-service teachers' opinions on the value of becoming a teacher shift, this study was framed within a social realist research paradigm, and aligned to a qualitative research approach. This study employed a multiple instrumental case study design, supported by a descriptive cross-sectional survey. I discuss how participants were selected, the consideration of ethical issues, and how data was collected and analysed. Lastly, I address the limitations of this study and outline the measures taken to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings.

## 4.1. Research Paradigm

This research adopted a social realist paradigm, which assumes that there is reality that exists that is independent of our understanding or experience of it. Arguing that organising principles underlie and generate what is observable or manifests empirically, social realism puts knowledge at the centre of the study of practices and how knowers enact them (Maton, 2013). Although knowledge is socially constructed, it has its own powers and has effects that extend beyond power dynamics among different groups (Maton, 2013). Social realism recognizes that social practices embody knowledge and possess inherent structuring powers, shaping thoughts, knowledge, and behaviours of individuals engaged in those practices (Maton, 2013). Knowledge and practices have tangible effects in the real world and warrant thorough examination. From this viewpoint, reciprocal relationship exists between the practice itself and the actors involved, as both influence and are influenced by one another (Maton, 2013).

Consequently, studies conducted from a social realist perspective seek to elucidate the underlying organizing principles that shape how individuals as social actors enact their involvement in practices like teaching. By adopting a social realism paradigm, this study seeks to reveal the organizing principles of how pre-service teachers who entered a B Ed degree with reservations position themselves in different ways as they complete a teaching qualification. It hoped to offer insights into the broader social and educational contexts that shape these journeys and inform potential interventions or support systems for similar students in ITE programmes.

## 4.2 Research approach

This study was qualitative as it seeks to understand participants' narrative accounts of how they came to study an ITE qualification and how they feel about teaching after being exposed to the

programmes offered by teacher education. My research questions required “rich narrative descriptions” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010, p. 322). Qualitative approach allows for creating rich descriptions that cannot be attained by converting extensive narratives into numerical data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This approach is open-minded and does not provide a single answer (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Qualitative research allowed me to delve into individuals’ unique experiences, perspectives and stories (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012).

### 4.3. Research Design

This research used a multiple instrumental case study design to explore the narratives of pre-service teachers during their ITE. According to Stake (1995), an instrumental case study is used when the case is examined mainly to provide insights into an issue or to refine a theoretical explanation. The aim of this study was to gain a detailed understanding of students’ narratives as examples of cases and generate rich insights that can contribute to theoretical understanding and practical applications (Cohen et al., 2007). Each student participant contributed a narrative of how they entered teaching and how they feel about becoming a teacher during their ITE programme.

This case study design was well-suited for capturing the uniqueness and individuality of each participant's journey. Teaching is a deeply personal and subjective experience, and a multiple instrumental case study approach allows for the exploration of diverse narratives, personal motivations and transformative moments that have shaped each participant's path to finding their passion in teaching (van Zyl, 2011). This depth of exploration offered valuable information that may not be captured in broader quantitative studies. The case study enabled this study to foreground the students’ own voices and experiences while generating insights that could inform both theory- through concepts like MacIntyre’s *internal goods* and LCT’s *autonomy codes* through practice in teacher education.

### 4.4. Participants

Participant selection in research involves choosing a subset of individuals from a larger population to serve as a representative sample. This approach is adopted to make the research process more feasible, considering the difficulty of engaging with the entire population (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore, the effectiveness of a research project heavily relies on the strategy, or strategies, employed by the researcher to select participants.

The participants in this study comprised final-year students who were completing their fourth year of a B.Ed. degree in 2023 at a public South African university. The data was collected

when the students were in their first- and fourth- years of study. There were 480 students in the B.Ed. fourth-year cohort, however, only 77 consented to make their responses from the *Teacher Choices in Action* module available for research. Of these, 32 agreed to participate and responded to the online survey in which their responses, intentions and plans were explored in more depth.

### 4.5. Data Collection

Some part of the project was working with secondary data collected from the *Teacher Choices in Action* Project (Ethics clearance: University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) Certificate H19/09/47 (see Appendix A). The student cohort who participated in the *Teacher Choices in Action* module in 2020 were invited to give their permission for their responses to certain questions to be used by researchers under the supervision of the project leader for secondary data analysis. The module had six units, and the data analysed in this study came from unit one, named "Choosing to be a teacher". Task 1.1. invited participants to share a narrative of their journeys to teaching, and my study used participants' answers from three questions completed in Unit 1 of *Teacher Choices in Action* module, namely:

1. "What did you think about teaching in primary school?"
2. "What did you feel about being a teacher in high school?"
3. "How do you feel about becoming a teacher now?".

They were also invited to respond to a forum discussion where they were asked, "What led you to enroll for teaching?" "Who or what influenced your decision?" "What are your hopes and fears about becoming a teacher?" Participants' responses to the first and second questions about their thoughts on becoming a teacher during their schooling helped me gain insights into their initial perceptions and attitudes towards the teaching profession. This information provided a foundation for exploring how these perceptions influenced their decision to pursue teacher education. Participants' responses to the third question allowed me to capture participants' current perspectives and feelings about their chosen profession. By comparing these responses to their earlier perceptions, I could identify any shifts in participants' attitudes and emotions towards teaching. This helps in exploring the transformative aspects of their journey and discovering if they have found a newfound passion.

To supplement the secondary data from the *Teacher Choices in Action* project, this study employed a cross-sectional survey targeting all fourth- year pre-service teachers registered at

the institution. The survey aimed to capture a range of broad snapshot of student's conceptions of teaching, their motivations for completing the B.Ed. program, and their intended carrier plans after graduation, reflecting the diverse experiences and trajectories of the cohort (Minnaar & Heystek, 2013).

The survey used a Likert-type scale design to allow participants to express levels of agreement or disagreement with ten carefully constructed statements (see Appendix F). These statements addressed key constructs relevant to the study—such as initial motivations, evolving perspectives on teaching during ITE, and post-qualification intentions. As a cross-sectional instrument, the survey collected data at a single point in time, which made it possible to identify patterns and trends across the cohort without tracking individual change longitudinally.

The survey was administered via Google Forms, allowing for efficient data collection and ensuring accessibility for participants. While the responses were not intended for statistical generalisation, the descriptive nature of the survey helped to complement the rich, qualitative narratives gathered through case studies by offering a broader contextual understanding of the student cohort.

By incorporating a variety of perspectives, I was able to develop a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the pathways individuals has taken to become passionate teachers. The survey helped me identify recurring themes, patterns, and commonalities in participants' experiences (Alshenqeeti, 2014). By analysing the responses and narratives, I was able to uncover important factors that contributed to the development of participants' passion for teaching. This can help inform educational policies, ITE programmes and recruitment strategies to better support and nurture future teachers.

### 4.6. Data Analysis

According to Maton & Chen (2016), when doing an LCT analysis, "*a translation tool* that enables articulation between its analytical concepts and a coding system is required to demonstrate how these concepts appear in the empirical data of the study" (Maton & Chen, 2016, p. 24). To demonstrate how pre-service teacher's motives shifted during their interaction with programmes offered by teacher education, different strengths of *positional autonomy* and *relational autonomy* of the empirical data were categorised according to the translation device in Table 3.1 and Table 3.2.

Table 4.1: An example of the empirical data and my analysis.

| **Student ID** | 21411 | **Strength of PA** | **Strength of RA** | **COMBINATION** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **FIRST** | During my high school experience, I still hated the idea of me becoming a teacher to other learners. Up until my last year of school I was not sure what to do as I finish school. The reason I felt that way was that I was not a school fan and hated school with my whole heart. | – – | – – | Exotic 3 |
| **THEN** | However, while dealing with my uncertainty of not knowing what to do after school, I had the idea of becoming a teacher, because **I was inspired by my previous teacher who use to teach me Geography.** I eventually considered the idea of becoming a Geography teacher. I began to take my school work serious and **I felt good about teaching other fellow learners** who were struggling in particular subjects like Geography. | ++ | ++ | Sovereign 2 |
| **NOW** | Now I feel good about becoming a teacher and will work on building myself to be my best teacher because I want to help the youth to build themselves into better people tomorrow and eliminate any negative thoughts about teachers. However, I feel the need to be sure that I really want to become a teacher. | + | + | Sovereign 3 |

**Mechanism for shift:** Interaction with teachers (Before Initial Teacher Education)

Experience of tutoring (Before Initial Teacher Education)

The Autonomy plane, showing how relative strengths of positional autonomy and relational autonomy give rise to four autonomy codes (see Figure 3.1), was then used to trace how the motives of students who entered teacher education reluctantly shifted or remained the same during their interaction with programmes offered by teacher education (see Figure 4.1 below).

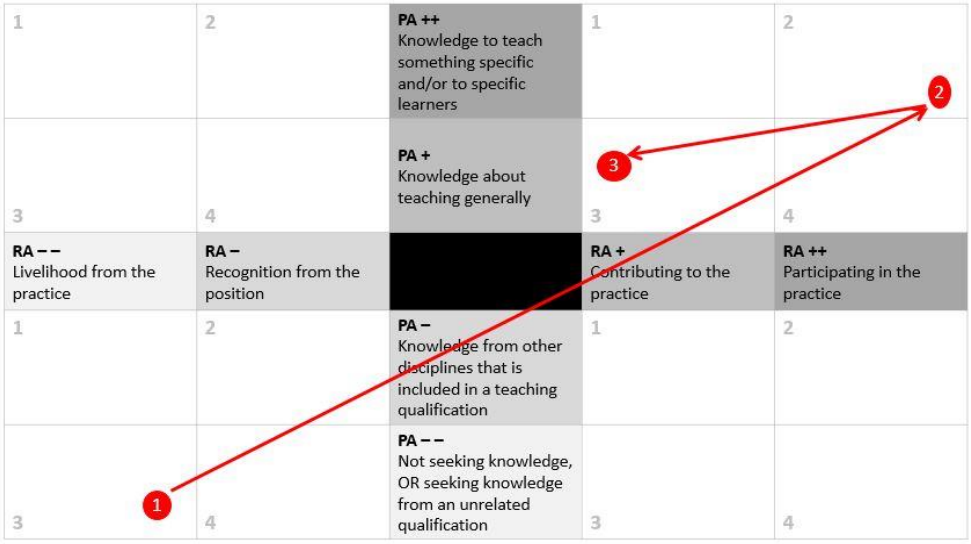



Figure 4.1: An example of how I plotted the data on the Autonomy plane.

I also identified and highlighted (in bold) the mechanisms that caused the shift or caused the participants to start straight at sovereign and how they account for changes or shifts (see Table 4.1 above). Because these mechanisms arose in a grounded way from the empirical data, I categories them into six categories based on the main idea they carried (see Table 4.2 below).

Table 4.2: Categories for mechanisms

| Mechanism | Example from the empirical data |
|---|---|
| **Experience of tutoring** | *"Tutoring my fellow classmates successfully and making them understand difficult concepts gave me the urge to explore teaching".* |
| **Interaction with teachers** | *"I got encouraged by my Geography teacher who had passion for teaching, which made a lot of learners to pass, I told myself that I would also be a teacher as I also started having passion for teaching".* |
| **Insight from theory** | *"As a pre-service teacher, the Becoming a teacher course has opened my mind".* |
| **School based teaching experience** | *"being in a school environment during TE where teachers are kind, committed to their work encouraged me into taking this journey of becoming a teacher".* |
| **Personal experiences** | *"I realized that it is important for me to become a teacher so that other learners do not face what I went through".* |
| **Community concern** | *"I was influenced by the socio-economic issues in my township. Growing up in a township with a high number of schools drop-outs, unemployment rate and crime I knew that change is needed".* |

To ensure reliability and rigour, coding procedures involved coding a sample of transcripts with my supervisor and peer researchers to check for consistency in theme development and category applications. Any discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus. An audit trail was maintained to document analytical decisions, and member checking was used with a subset of participants to validate interpretations of their narratives.

### 4.7. Trustworthiness of the findings

To ensure credibility, dependability and confirmability of the data in this study, when gathering data, I used two data collection methods that align with my research objectives. This includes using previously collected data from the *Teacher Choices in Action* project, and a survey. This multi-method approach allows for data triangulation, enhancing the credibility and reliability of the findings (Guest et al., 2012). Combining the survey and the secondary data from the *Teacher Choices in Action* project helped me cross-validate the data, ensuring the reliability and accuracy of the findings (Sani, 2013). Surveys provided a broader perspective by reaching a larger sample size and allowed participants to elaborate on their responses and provide additional context (Sani, 2013).

As a researcher engaged in the field of teacher education, I was occupying a dual role as both an academic working closely with pre-service teachers and as someone who has personally undergone the journey of becoming a teacher. This positioning inevitably shaped the way I approached the research, from formulating of research questions to the interpretation of the data. My own belief about the transformative potential of ITE may have shaped how I read and interpreted the narratives. While I tried to maintain analytical distance, I acknowledge that my optimism about teaching as a meaningful profession could have subtly influenced the emphasis I placed on certain themes, especially around the discovery of teaching's "internal goods" (MacIntyre, 2013). To guard against this bias, I used systematic coding procedures and engaged in member checking to ensure that interpretations were grounded in the data rather than in my expectations.

Additionally, using a translation device mitigated this issue by making the theory and indicators for the codes explicit and transparent (Maton, 2018). By making the theory and indicators explicit, the translation device ensures that the data analysis process is grounded in a well-defined framework and reduces the potential for personal biases to influence the interpretation of the data. Transparency is also crucial because it allows others to understand and evaluate the data analysis process, enhancing the credibility and replicability of the research findings.

### 4.8. Ethical Considerations

An ethical research project considers participant' rights, privacy and dignity. In this study, the rights and dignity of participants were protected in various ways. Firstly, regarding the *Teacher Choices in Action* dataset, I received anonymized data where the personal details of the participants had been removed by the project leader. Each participant had been allocated a random identifier by the MS Access Database, in which data from TCiA is managed and stored. I referred to this identifier when quoting their responses. The participants are not named at all because their responses are presented in the form of statistics and quotes. Their identifying details are not included in the research report or any conference paper or published paper that arises from this study.

Secondly, with the survey data students were invited to participate in a study on the professional development of student teachers. An invitation letter to the survey was sent to all fourth-year pre-service teachers (see Appendix D). The study was explained in this letter, and students were notified that participation in this survey was voluntary. They were assured that they may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences, respecting their autonomy. If they choose to participate, all their information would be completely confidential and anonymous. The survey was conducted using an online link, and the informed consent and information for the study was part of the online setup (see Appendix E). All data (electronic and material) were secured in a password protected database where their names and identifying details were anonymised. Participants were requested to provide their details in case they wished to withdraw at some point. The participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained, and to ensure no negative consequences to them, pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants.

The full study has obtained ethical clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical) Certificate H19/09/47 (see Appendix A). This study has also obtained ethical clearance (Certificate 2023ECE055M) from the Wits School of Education Ethics committee (see Appendix B). The Deputy Head of School (Research) also permitted me to conduct this research with fourth-year students (see Appendix C).

### 4.9. Limits of the study

Every research undertaking has potential limits because choices must be made regarding how, when, and with whom a study is conducted. Every choice has alternatives, and this section will discuss the limitations of the choices that I made in relation to the present research. This

discussion is crucial as it provide a transparent view of the research process and its potential constrains.

The limit of the TCiA data includes that the data is self-reporting of their perceptions and experiences. This enables participants to express their narratives and means that the data cannot be triangulated with other sources. It cannot be independently verified. Therefore, the findings analyse the student narratives of their own journeys into and through teacher education. Additionally, participants wrote it online without the opportunity for follow-up interviews. Without direct interaction, I missed the chance to clarify ambiguous responses, delve deeper into participants' reasoning or gather additional context that could enrich the data. This limitation could have impacted the depth and accuracy of the insights gained from the study. However, I mitigated this by doing a follow-up survey. By conducting a follow-up survey, I allowed participants to elaborate on their initial answers and offer further insights into their perspectives. This contributed to the overall richness and reliability of the data collected as the findings from the *TCiA* were triangulated with a second data source. Still, relatively few students from the cohort responded to the survey.

Out of the 480 students in the fourth-year B.Ed. cohort, only 32 (7%) participants who gave consent for their data to be collected by the *TCiA* project responded to my online survey. This low response rate of only 32 participants out of 480 students in the fourth-year B.Ed. cohort means that I cannot claim generalisable findings. The small sample size reduces the statistical power of the research, limiting the generalizability of the results to the larger population of interest. Moreover, it raises concerns about the external validity and reliability of the study, as the responses from the 32 participants may need to accurately reflect the diverse perspectives and experiences within the entire cohort. Nevertheless, the survey results still offer a valuable qualitative insight into the post-degree intentions and shifting motivations of the 32 participants, enriching the case study narratives and supporting the broader interpretive goals of this study. Rather than seeking to produce statistically generalizable claims, the aim here was to offer theoretically informed insights that deepen our understanding of the personal and professional trajectories of pre-service teachers within a specific institutional context.

While the tools of Autonomy used in this study offers a robust analytic framework for mapping how pre-service teachers shift in the knowledge they seek and the benefit they hope to derive from an ITE qualification, it has limitations when applied to complex, real- world contexts and particular those marked by intersecting social inequalities. One key limitation lies in its limited

engagement with intersectionality, the way race, gender, class and other social categories interact to shape individuals' experiences and choices. Positional and Relational autonomy tend to treat social actors as relatively stable participants within practices, without fully accounting for how structural inequalities and lived experiences (e.g., of poverty, racial marginalisation, or gendered expectations) mediate access to and valuation of both knowledge and professional benefits.

For example, a student from a low-income background may initially appear to enact a projected or exotic code (e.g., seeking job security or upward mobility), but this positioning may reflect economic necessity rather than a lack of commitment to teaching as a practice. Similarly, students from historically disadvantaged communities may interpret the internal goods of teaching (RA+) through culturally situated lenses that tools from Autonomy does not easily capture. To mitigate this a secondary analysis with Specialisation from LCT would be needed- but this is beyond the scope of this study.

Lastly, while this study will provide rich and detailed information about the role of teacher education in teacher identity at one university, the findings must be more generalised to a larger population (Guest et al., 2012). The findings will be specific to the study's participants and may not represent other teachers or teaching experiences at different universities in South Africa. Using a case study design also limits the ability to make broad generalisations or draw statistically significant conclusions. The findings may be specific to the selected cases and may not reflect the experiences of a larger population of pre-service teachers (Guest et al., 2012). However, similar data is available for pre-service teachers from other universities, and the methodology and analytic tools can be used to explore whether the patterns are similar across different cohorts. This opens up exciting opportunities for further study for myself or others.

# **Chapter 5:** The knowledge and benefits students seek upon entry into ITE

This findings chapter presents the first part of the data analysis conducted in this study. I examine the specific knowledge sought by participants upon entering ITE by exploring the strength of the *positional autonomy* in their responses. Using the translation device (see Figure 3.1), I discuss patterns in their narratives in each of the four categories of *positional autonomy*. Next, I explore the benefits they aim to derive from obtaining a teaching qualification. I consider the extent to which they see the knowledge offered by a B.Ed. degree as enabling them to get benefits internal to the practice of teaching or external to them. Lastly, I look at the overall distribution patterns of the knowledge and benefits participants seek upon entering a B.Ed. degree plotted across the autonomy plane.

## 5.1 The knowledge students seek *(Positional Autonomy)*

So far, I have argued that the pursuing knowledge in teacher education is multifaceted and dynamic. Teacher education programmes traditionally attract individuals passionate about imparting knowledge and shaping young minds. However, other students enter these programmes without the primary goal of becoming traditional classroom teachers. Instead, they seek diverse forms of knowledge that can enrich their personal and professional lives in ways beyond conventional teaching roles. In this section I delve into the different kinds of expertise students seek when entering teacher education.

Most participants in this study initially sought either knowledge for teaching (PA+) or knowledge from a complete different qualification unrelated to education (PA– –). In other words, two categories of positional autonomy (namely PA+ and PA– –) accounted for the initial position of 90% of participants and were the dominant strengths of positional autonomy for participants at the start of their respective journeys to teaching. See Figure 5.1 below.

| | |
|---|---|
| **PA ++**<br>Knowledge to teach something specific and/or to specific learners | **5 participants**<br>**6%** |
| **PA +**<br>Knowledge about teaching generally | **37 participants**<br>**48%** |
| **PA –**<br>Knowledge related to teaching qualifications | **3 participants**<br>**4%** |
| **PA – –**<br>Not seeking knowledge, OR seeking knowledge from an unrelated qualification | **32 participants**<br>**42%** |

Figure 5.1: Knowledge (PA) that participants seek at the start of their teacher preparation.

### 5.1.1 Seeking knowledge to teach a specific subject/learners (PA++)

According to Figure 5.1, 6% of participants entered ITE with a clear intention to teach specific subject or a particular category of learners. They initiated their educational journey with a *stronger positional autonomy* (PA++), a construct from LCT, which reflects a commitment to acquiring specialised knowledge *internal* to the field of teaching, knowledge that is not easily transferable, but deeply embedded within the professional practices (MacIntrye, 2013)

From the dataset, it was observed that three of the five participants who commenced their journey at PA++ articulated a clear focus on Mathematics as their subject of interest. Their decisions were not incidental but grounded in a recognition of the subject's importance and its challenges within the South African schooling context. Participant 19691, for instance stated, *"*Mathematics is a hard subject, and I want to help children understand maths and have a chance at entering the top universities because maths is the key". Similarly, Participant 19702 linked their personal academic interest directly to their motivation to teach, "what lead me to enrol for teaching is the interest I have in Mathematics". These statements reflect an orientation towards specialised pedagogical knowledge for a specific domain, what MacIntre (2013) would describe as the pursuit of the internal goods of a practice. These participants viewed B.Ed. not as a generic qualification, but as a means to attain discipline-specific pedagogical content knowledge, enacting stronger positional autonomy (PA++).

In contrast to the above participants who entered ITE seeking knowledge about and teaching Mathematics, Participant 22996 also enacted a stronger positional autonomy (PA++) but within Engineering Graphics and Design (EGD). His motivation stemmed from a critique of the dominance of Mathematics and Science in schooling. He stated that, "Growing up, I hated how math and science were the most important subjects which in one way or another determined your future". Instead, he saw EGD as a powerful vehicle for unlocking creativity and preparing learners for careers in design and architecture "I therefore gained interest in becoming a teacher specialising in EGD. Teaching this subject to learners will help expose their creative skills so they can be well prepared to study architectural courses in higher institutions". Here again, the decision to enrol for B.Ed. reflects the pursuit of practice specific knowledge directed towards teaching a defined subject to achieve meaningful, future –oriented outcomes for learners. He enacts a stronger positional autonomy (PA++).

Unlike the previous participants who all entered the B.Ed. seeking to learn to teach a particular subject, some participants were quite specific about the *kind or ages of learners* they wanted to teach. Which also enacts a stronger positional autonomy (PA++). For example, Participant 23345 described how her decision to become a teacher was rooted in a desire to address literacy challenges among marginalised communities... She stated that "what actually led me to enrol for the teaching qualification was my concerns about people who are illiterate… "I wanted to help those in need and decrease the number of people who struggled academically and [with] literacy*"*. The pursuit of knowledge here is again internal to the professional not through a focus on subject matter, but through a targeted commitment to a learner demographic that demand pedagogical sensitivity and socio-educational insight. Her case shows that strong positional autonomy (PA++) can also manifest in relation to social justice goals, particularly when teaching is seen as a means to reduce educational inequities.

### 5.1.2. Seeking knowledge about teaching generally (PA+)

Figure 5.1 indicates that 48% of participants in this study came into teaching looking for general knowledge about teaching without a specific focus on particular subjects or learners. They initiated their educational journey with a significant emphasis on *stronger positional autonomy* (PA+), where the desire to engage in the teaching profession is present, but the knowledge sought is not tied to a clearly defined disciplinary or pedagogical niche. However, categorising these participants proved challenging due to the need for more specificity in their responses regarding the type of knowledge they sought. Instead, their responses primarily delved into their desire to pursue teaching, enacting relational autonomy (RA). For example, Participant 20306 said, "I choose teaching because I want to change how learners feel about school and education. I think that school should be a place where everybody feels safe. Teachers should be mentors and parents and be responsible for grooming learners into future responsible leaders". These participants were categorised as seeking knowledge about teaching generally, enacting a stronger positional autonomy (PA+). Their statements indicated a desire to become teachers, suggesting an interest in acquiring knowledge about teaching. However, their focus appeared to be on acquiring general rather than specific knowledge about teaching a particular subject.

According to the findings, it was observed that most participants in this study were pursuing a teaching degree primarily to acquire the necessary qualifications for entering the teaching profession. For example, while Participant 23155 said, "I was influenced by my life science teacher because of the way he taught and made sure that we learners understand …. I want to

be able to make this same kind of difference in the lives of other teenagers", Participant 21406 said "My secondary school teachers were not really good, I believe they lacked passion and they were just people who chased the payslip. Their teaching methods were also questionable. I then felt that teaching as a career is a viable option; I saw that I could try to make a change so that the kind of behaviour I experienced in my secondary schooling could be eradicated". The above statements convey that students in this cohort's motivation stemmed from personal experiences with their teachers, prompting them to seek to understand teaching methods with the intention of either replicating or adapting the approaches used by their own teachers.

### 5.1.3 Knowledge from other disciplines that are included in a teaching qualification (PA–)

Figure 5.1 indicates that 4% of participants in this study wanted to study a different field but ended up taking teaching to further their knowledge in an associated field of study. These participants initiated their educational journey with a relatively *weaker positional autonomy* (PA–). In LCT terms, weaker positional autonomy reflects situations where students engage in a field of study not for the intrinsic value of the knowledge or seeking membership into the professional practice itself, but rather for external reasons, such as using the degree as a stepping stone to another discipline or as a fall-back option.

Among these individuals, all three participants expressed hesitancy upon entering teacher education. Originally aspiring towards careers such as 'educational psychologist', 'actress or director', and 'mass communication officer', they pursued teaching due to not being accepted into their desired programmes but saw teaching as a related field. As Participant 18600 said, "Since I could not study drama in university X, with teaching as my third choice, I decided to go through with it". Similarly, Participant 21400 said, "I soon realised that I could study further and become an Educational Psychologist……. With all this new information, I was set on becoming a teacher, hopefully one day an educational psychologist". These participants, despite experiencing initial disappointment from not gaining acceptance into their preferred qualification, opted to enrol in teacher education. They perceived the knowledge imparted by the teaching qualification as a gateway to entering their desired field of study. Here, the B.Ed. degree is used as a pathway to another profession, enacting a weaker positional autonomy (PA–).

### 5.1.4. Not seeking knowledge or seeking knowledge from an unrelated qualification (PA– –)

Lastly, Figure 5.1 indicates that 42% of participants in this study came into teaching not sure or not seeking any knowledge related to teaching. These participants initiated their educational journey with a much *weaker positional autonomy* (PA– –). This positioning reflects an entry point into the teaching field where participants did not initially value the specialist knowledge associated with the profession. Instead, their trajectories into teacher education appear to be shaped by external circumstances or priorities.

A predominant finding among this cohort of participants was that, for the majority, teaching was not a career path they had previously considered during their formative years. Rather, they exhibited a stronger inclination towards alternative careers such as Law, Accounting or Economics, indicting they initially oriented themselves towards disciplines perceived as high-status or lucrative. For example, Participant 11088 stated, "During my school years, I didn't see myself becoming a teacher …. I wanted to be an advocate", "I never considered teaching as a career I want to pursue…. I wanted to be an accountant" (Participant 18574). Another revealed how "I had never thought teaching would be a career path I would end up pursuing. I had always wanted to be an economic analyst" (Participant 11293). These accounts suggest that these participants saw little value in teacher education at the outset of their journey.

It was also evident that certain participants needed to pursue knowledge about teaching due to societal perceptions of the profession. For example, Participant 19692 said, "Teaching was the last profession in my mind because of how undermined it was by learners and society", while Participant 19693 cited financial criticisms, "Due to endless criticisms that included salary, I imagined a teacher's life as horrible and unbearable". According to these findings, most of students opt not to pursue a teaching qualification due to the societal perception that other careers are superior and more closely linked with success than teaching.

Additionally, certain participants were not actively seeking knowledge related to teaching due to their personal perceptions of the profession, describing it as "dull," "tiresome," or "fraught with hardships". They stated, "Being a teacher was never part of my aspirations growing up. I viewed teaching as somewhat a dull and tiresome job" (Participant 18585). Participant 20402 shared, "I never dreamt of becoming a teacher; this is because I saw the hardships teachers used to face on a daily basis". Based on these experiences, these participants expressed

reluctance to become educators. These statements enact a weaker positional autonomy (PA– – ).

Certain participants continued to seek knowledge elsewhere even while registered for a teaching qualification. For example, Participant 11806 said, “Teaching was never my choice. In varsity, all the courses I applied for rejected me except teaching profession. I had to take it in order to avoid taking a gap year,” Her enrolment seemed tentative, suggesting she might not continue with the teaching qualification because she only chose to pursue it to prevent a gap year, meaning she was still seeking knowledge somewhere. This further enacts a weaker positional autonomy (PA– –).

### 5.1.5 Summary

In summary, the findings from this section indicate that participants in this study pursued diverse types of knowledge upon entering teacher education. While a notable majority of students (54%) (PA++ & PA+) demonstrated an interest in acquiring knowledge related to teaching, a substantial subgroup of participants (46%) (PA-- & PA-) appeared less engaged in seeking such knowledge or may have pursued teaching qualifications for reasons not directly linked to educational objectives relating specifically to teaching.

## 5.2 The purpose for which students seek a teaching qualification (Relational Autonomy)

The decision to pursue a teaching qualification is often multifaceted and driven by a diverse benefit, ranging from personal passions and career aspirations to societal responsibilities and cultural values. While some individuals are drawn to teaching by a passion for imparting knowledge, others are influenced by personal experiences, career aspirations, or societal needs. This section delves into the multifaceted benefits students seek from acquiring a teaching qualification.

Figure 5.2 below presents the various benefits that participants in this study aimed to attain by acquiring a teaching qualification at the onset of their journey towards teaching. Throughout their initial foray into the field, four distinct principles of relative autonomy (RA– –, RA–, RA++, and RA+) were identified, reflecting differing degrees of self-motivation and purposefulness in their pursuit of teaching qualifications.

| RA – –<br>Livelihood from the practice | RA –<br>Recognition from the position | RA +<br>Contributing to the practice | RA ++<br>Participating in the practice |
|---|---|---|---|
| **26 participants<br>34%** | **10 participants<br>13%** | **22 participants<br>28%** | **19 participants<br>25%** |

Figure 5.2: Benefits (RA) that participants seek to derive at the start of their teacher preparation.

### 5.2.1 Seeking benefits from the internal goods of the practice (RA++)

Figure 5.2 indicates that 25% of the participants commenced their journey seeking benefits related to the 'internal goods' of the teaching practice, embodying what LCT describe as strong relational autonomy (RA++). These participant's narratives reveal interest in exploring the internal goods (MacIntyre, 2013), that is they are drawn to the profession not for external rewards such as status or financial gain, but for the intrinsic satisfaction derived from contributing to learner development, mastering pedagogy and participating meaningfully in a moral and educational practice.

They expressed their enthusiasm for teaching through statements such as "I cannot wait to start teaching" (Participant 23135), and "I really cannot wait to acquire the pedagogical techniques and be able to practice them in front of learners in a classroom" (Participant 20365). Additionally, Participant 21400 conveyed his anticipation of completing their degree, stating, "I do not see myself doing anything else". The shared characteristic among these participants is their evident enthusiasm and eager anticipation for entering the teaching profession. They express excitement about commencing their teaching careers, mastering pedagogical techniques, and fulfilling the requirements of their degrees to become educators.

These participants find immense satisfaction in being inside a classroom and guiding learners. Participant 19726 expressed this sentiment: "Helping learners ever since is what makes me feel alive. The feeling I get when explaining a concept and someone understands it is priceless". This internal drive to connect learners and foster their understanding reflects a virtuous engagement with the teaching practice, where success is measured not by external markers but by the educational growth of others. Participant 23135's aspiration to " establish a safe space for learners, knowing that they are allowed to be different and have different views about anything," adds an important ethical and relational dimension to this orientation. This reflects

not only a pursuit of excellence in instruction but also a moral commitment to inclusivity, empathy, and learner centeredness, hallmarks of what MacIntyre would classify as the cultivation of virtues through practice.

This also support the social realist paradigm underpinning this study which argue that knowledge and identity are socially situated, and becoming a teacher involves not just acquiring discrete skills, but entering a complex, morally infused community of practice (Rusznyak & Bertram, 2021; MacIntyre, 2013) These participants are not simply learning about teaching, they are learning to become teachers, internalising the logics, values and aims of the profession.

### 5.2.2 Seeking benefits from contributing to the practice (RA+)

Figure 5.2 illustrates that 28% of the participants embarked on their educational journey with a focus on positively contributing to the teaching practice and the education sector at large, rather than solely focusing on personal advancement or technical skills acquisition. This group exhibit a strong form of relational autonomy (RA+), as identified within the LCT Autonomy dimension. This orientation reflects what MacIntyre (2013) calls a pursuit of the "internal goods" of a practice, the moral and social rewards that come from striving for excellence and meaningful contribution within a socially cooperative activity.

Within this cohort, two predominant themes emerged. Firstly, participants expressed a desire to make a meaningful impact by influencing the development of young learners. This sentiment is reflected in statements such as, "I want to help the youth to build themselves into better people tomorrow" (Participant 21411) and "I want to help a lot of young minds as a teacher" (Participant 11088). These participants say that they are commitment to helping students grow and develop academically and as individuals with the potential to contribute positively to society. Additionally, they express a passion for education and a desire to give back to their communities by serving as teachers. Their responses indicate a strong internalisation of the practice's goals beyond the self. This reflects a commitment to the core values of the teaching practice, particularly as a means for nurturing human flourishing.

Participants also expressed a strong belief in the preventative and restorative power of education. Participant 20333 articulated a belief that by influencing the thoughts and behaviours of learners, he could make a small contribution to addressing these challenges. He stated, "I am entitled to bring change and I believe that by so doing, I would be decreasing high crises like crime rates, drug abuse and many more". Furthermore, these participants expressed

their commitment to fostering positive change in students' lives, with Participant 21398 expressing concern about their student's future success and character development. She remarked, "I fear not being able to see my students succeeding in their work and becoming better citizens in their communities". These examples indicate a higher degree of integrating between self and the goals of the practice, they do not see themselves as separate from the field of education, but rather as agents working though the practice to address broader societal needs.

Secondly, certain participants expressed their intention to enact change within the education system by acquiring a teaching qualification. They articulated a desire to contribute to the practice by initiating transformational processes. Several participants expressed dissatisfaction with the current state of the education system. For instance, Participant 21401 voiced concern, stating, "I pursued a career in teaching because I believe there is so much that needs to be done to the South African education system." Similarly, Participant 19692 highlighted concerns about the system's inadequacies, stating, "Seeing how bad our teaching system is in South Africa and how difficult it was for some learners to pass (getting a minimum of 50%), I felt like it was upon me to contribute to the change that I wanted to see in our country". Therefore, through obtaining a teaching degree they hope to "see South African education system improved in one of the days" (Participant 197012). These participants exhibit what LCT conceptualises as stronger relational autonomy (RA+) orientations, because they connect their personal development directly to systemic and institutional improvement. Such expressions also resonate with MacIntyre's (2013) idea that practitioners are custodians and improvers of a tradition.

### 5.2.3 Seeking benefits from a changed social position in society (RA–)

According to Figure 5.2, 13% of the participants in the study initiated their educational journeys seeking recognition and validation through the social identity associated with being a teacher. This positioning enacts a relatively *weak relational autonomy* (RA–). In this context, weaker relational autonomy refers to the pursuit of external goods/benefits that can be gained from the position of being a teacher, but which are not intrinsic to the specialised knowledge or ethical core of the teaching practice itself.

Within this cohort, three prominent themes emerged among the participants' motivations. Firstly, many expressed a desire to serve as role models for others, viewing teaching as a means to inspire and positively influence others. For example, Participant 18574 said, "Growing up in a community where young people think going to school is useless, I wanted to become a role

model to my siblings and other people in my society". Participant 20328 stated, "I choose teaching because I want to be a role model to other learners and be open-minded". The emphasis is not on the internal logic or epistemic value of teaching, but rather on the social status conferred by the position of being a teacher. In LCT terms, this suggest *weaker relational autonomy* because the recognition is not derived from participation in the practice itself, but from how that participation is perceived externally. From MacIntyre's (2013) perspective, this reflects a pursuit for external goods rather than the internal goods that comes from engaging meaningfully with the complexities of teaching.

Additionally, to some participants obtaining a teaching degree was seen as a pathway to garner recognition, both within their communities and professionally. For example, while Participant 12007 said "I did not qualify for law in university X and at university Z they said that there is no space left for LLB law, but at least I was granted a space for teaching", Participants 20322 said "Due to the fact that my maths marks were low, they rejected me in the chemical engineering field and I took the offer of teaching". These narratives point to instrumental motivations, where teaching becomes a Plan B, a fall-back career that still affords some social legitimacy. The recognition sought here is again external to teaching's epistemic or ethical demands. This further supports the characterisation of these participants' positional as weaker relational autonomy as their attachment to the profession is tenuous and conditional.

Lastly, some participants cited the recognition associated with studying at the best university in the country as a benefit driving their pursuit of a teaching qualification. In their responses, Participant 21406 said, "I feel very confident in the X School of Education because it is regarded as the best school of education in Africa". Similarly, Participant 10705 also said "I feel excited about becoming a teacher. I'm studying at one of the best universities in the country". These statements collectively reflect recognition-seeking not necessarily through the teaching profession, but via association with institutional excellence. While pride in institutional affiliation is understandable, the pursuit of symbolic capital through university branding again reflects a relational autonomy that is defined outside the internal demands of teaching practice. In LCT terms, this enacts a weaker relational autonomy because the value attributed to the teaching journey is dependent on externally derived benefit.

In conclusion, the identified themes underscore the significance of recognition and prestige in influencing participants' educational pursuits. These individuals strongly emphasise the reputation and status of the educational institutions they are affiliated with. However, while

recognition and prestige are important factors in shaping their decisions, these benefits are not internal to the teaching profession and can also be derived from obtaining other qualifications.

### 5.2.4 Benefits unrelated to the internal practices of teaching (RA– –)

Lastly, Figure 5.2 illustrates that the largest proportion (34%) of participants in this study started seeking benefits unrelated to the internal practice of teaching indicating a *weaker relational autonomy* (RA– **–)**. This classification focuses on seeking derived benefits from a changed material position in society or other factors. Three dominant themes emerged from this cohort of students. Firstly, many students expressed that they were not seeking any specific benefits from undertaking the teaching qualification. Participant 20340 admitted, "I never had any thoughts on becoming a teacher one day in my life. I always wanted to do Medicine," while Participant 20350 echoed "I did not even consider applying for teaching …. I did not even care". Both participants expressed a similar sentiment that teaching was not their initial career choice or aspiration. They were not seeking any benefits associated with the teaching qualification.

A prevalent theme among the cohort of participants pertained to the issue of teacher salaries. Many participants believed that the compensation received by teachers is not commensurate with the level of effort and dedication they invest in their daily work. For example, while Participant 18550 said, "The fact that the teacher's salary is lower than what I expected really made me want to change to another career", Participant 19693 also said, "I completely disregarded the idea of being a teacher, due to endless criticisms that included salary". Such statements illustrate a reduction of teaching to an economic transaction rather than a vocation. These students entered teaching expecting tangible rewards that, when unmet, undermined their relational investment in the profession.

Some students indicated they were pursuing teaching due to the job assurance it provides. In their responses Participant 20325 noted that, "the is a high demand of teachers in the education sector…. [so] the chance of being employed… is very high," while participant 20372 said plainly, "I was never really passionate about teaching, but I chose it because of the holidays and the short hours". What drew these students to enrol for a teaching degree was more about conditions of service that offered their perception of working hours rather than the core interactions with learners around mediated knowledge. This enacts a weaker relational autonomy (RA– **–)** as these students were seeking benefits that lies external to the goods of the practice.

### 5.2.5 Summary

In summary, the findings from this section suggest that participants in this study enrolled for a teaching qualification seeking different benefits. While the majority of participants (53%) (RA+ & RA++) were seeking benefits that are internal to the teaching profession, a substantial subgroup of participant (47%) (RA– & RA– –) were seeking benefits that are not exclusive to teaching but can also be obtained through other professions.

## 5.3 Distribution of participants' reasons for entering an ITE programme

I now combine the positional and relational autonomy for each participant's reasons for registering for a B.Ed. degree. This gives a coordinate position on the autonomy plane (Figure 3.1). This position indicates both the knowledge students seek and the benefits they seek from obtaining a teaching qualification, and the autonomy code that legitimates their journey into teaching at a particular time.

Upon analysing the *Teacher Choices in Action* dataset, which consisted of 77 (100%) participants, it became evident that two autonomy codes, namely the *sovereign code* and *exotic code*, played a dominant role in shaping the initial stages of their journey. As depicted in Figure 5.3, nearly 90% of the participants embarked on their journeys within these codes, sparking curiosity about the reasons behind this prevalent trend.

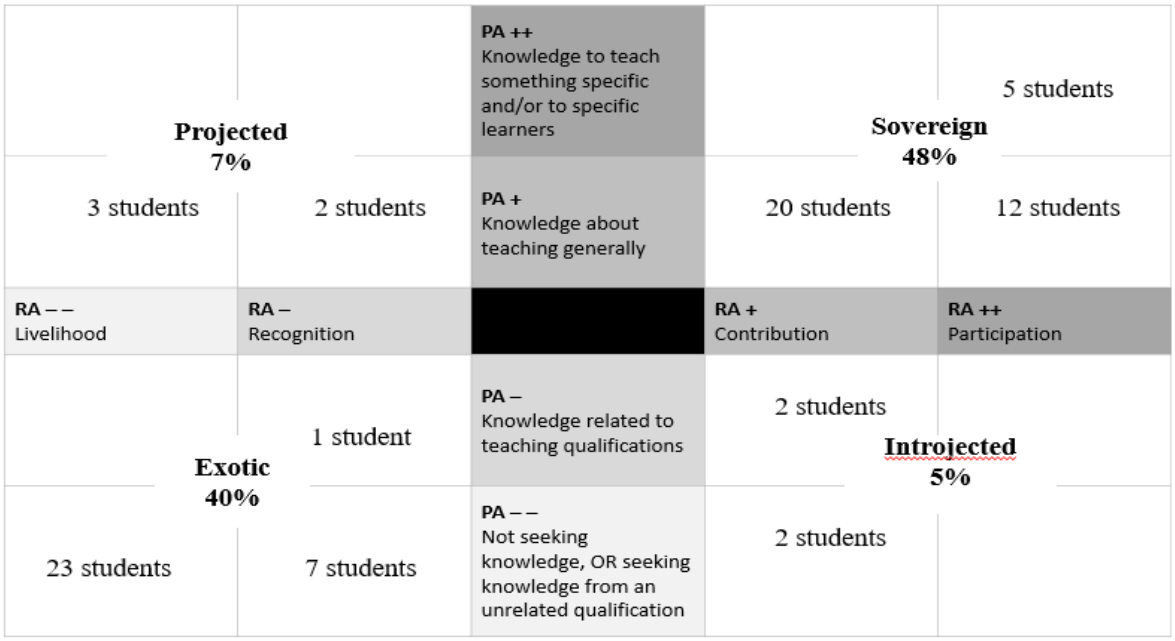



Figure 5.3: The autonomy codes enacted by participants at the start of their teacher preparation.

My analysis revealed that 48% of the participants embarked on their teaching journey with a clear sense of purpose, reflect stronger *positional autonomy* and stronger *relational autonomy*. The individuals proactively sought out knowledge for the purposes of participating in the practices of teaching and expressed a deep commitment to the profession's values and outcomes. This positions them within the *sovereign code*, which describes students who pursue education with a clear intention of engaging with the field's specialised knowledge and seeking rewards related to its core task of enabling learning through organising interactions between learners and subject knowledge.

Their narratives typically reflected strong professional identity formation early in their studies. They expressed aspirations tied to classroom practice, subject –specific teaching, and long-term career commitment. Their orientation aligns closely with MacIntyre (2013) notion of internal goods unique to the teaching profession. These participants were not merely acquiring a qualification but were actively seeking entry into a moral and intellectual tradition where excellence is defined by impact and transformation within the classroom.

However, 52% of participants entered ITE reluctantly or with some reservations. This includes participants 40% who started in the *exotic code*. The cohort of participants entered the teaching profession for a range of reasons, with just under half seeking knowledge because they felt confident that they would derive satisfaction from doing the work of teachers. Conversely, some participants found themselves teaching by default rather than due to an inherent passion for the profession. These participants did not actively seek knowledge or anticipate internal benefits associated with obtaining a teaching qualification.

Within the *exotic code*, two distinctive scenarios emerged as noteworthy. Firstly, there was a sizeable group (30%) of participants who were not interested in becoming teachers. This subset of individuals enrolled in ITE programmes, but they did so without actively seeking or showing interest in acquiring knowledge through the ITE curriculum (PA– –). Their participation in ITE programmes lacked a specific intention to gain educational knowledge relevant to teaching. Furthermore, this subset exhibited a conspicuous lack of motivation to accrue benefit (RA– –) from the teaching profession's internal goods. Not only did these participants exhibit disinterest in the intellectual facets of teaching, but they also showed indifference towards the practical, day-to-day aspects of the profession. They appeared indifferent to both the theoretical knowledge and the practical skills and benefits associated with being a teacher.

For example, most participants, in this case, said something similar to the participants who said that they had "... completely disregarded the idea of being a teacher; I began this journey with great anxiety and stress, not knowing whether the new life I'm choosing, will welcome me or push me away" (Participant 19693). Participant 18585 conceded that "being a teacher was never part of my aspirations growing up". They viewed teaching as a "somewhat a dull and tiresome 'job'". While Participant 19693 conveys a feeling of unease and uncertainty as they embark on their educational journey, Participant 18585 emphasise a lack of early interest in teaching as a vocation, portraying it as a potentially unexciting and fatiguing profession. Both these statements collectively indicate a common theme where individuals express a significant initial hesitancy and reluctance towards pursuing a career in teaching.

Secondly, within the dataset, a distinct cluster of participants (9%) who, despite their enrolment in the B.Ed. degree did not actively seek knowledge acquisition (PA– –) as provided by the ITE curriculum. Instead, their motivation for undertaking ITE was driven by a pursuit of extrinsic benefits (RA–) unrelated to the intrinsic knowledge associated with teaching such as recognition derived from holding the position of a teacher. An emphasis on instrumental gains external to the immediate pedagogical knowledge acquisition characterised their engagement with ITE.

For example, Participant 12007 said, "… to be honest, I never thought of becoming a teacher; I always wanted to become a lawyer…I did not qualify for law at University X and University Y, but I was granted a space for teaching…Growing up in a community where young people think going to school is useless, I wanted to become a role model to my siblings and other people in my society". The participant's decision to enrol in an ITE programme is noteworthy for its pragmatic underpinning, enacting a weaker positional autonomy (PA– –). Despite lacking an intrinsic inclination towards teaching, the participant recognised the ITE qualification as an alternative avenue with tangible benefits. The participant's ambition extended beyond personal career goals to encompass a broader societal objective, become a role model, and defy the prevailing cynicism regarding the utility of education. Enacting a weaker relational autonomy (RA–).

A different set of data also showed a similar pattern. In responding to a survey about their journeys to teaching, over 56% of the cohort agreed to some extent with the statement, "I had many reservations about teaching as a choice of career when I enrolled for the B.Ed. degree", as shown in Figure 5.4 below.

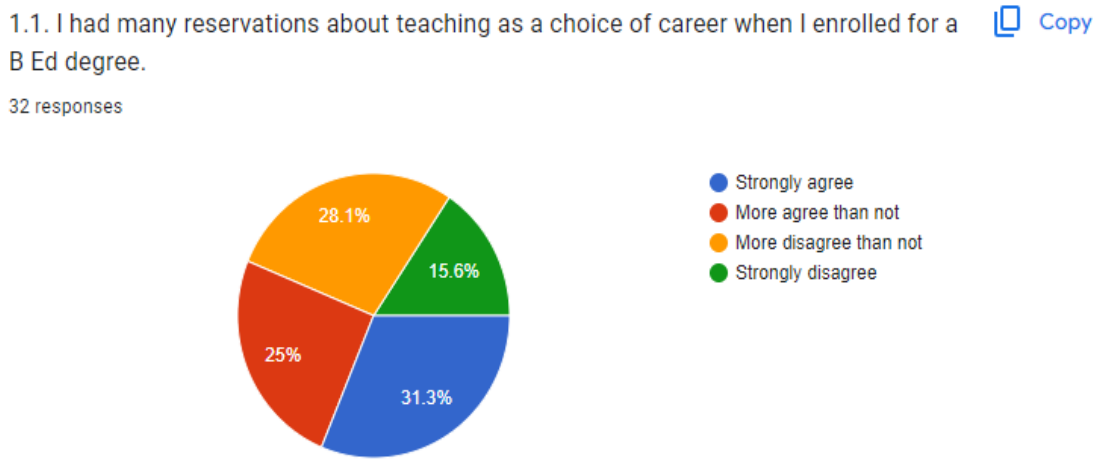



Figure 5.4: Students' reporting having reservations on starting a teacher preparation programme.

Over 31% of those expressed a strong agreement with the statement, while 25% of the participants affirmed a sentiment of *"more agree than not"*. This suggests a nuanced orientation within the cohort, wherein individuals may have enrolled in ITE programmes focusing on acquiring knowledge associated with the teaching qualification without necessarily expressing a parallel interest in the internal benefits intrinsic to the teaching practice or vice versa.

This group may be understood through MacIntyre (2013) framework as newcomers still navigating the norms, values and logic of the practice. They have yet to discover the "internal goods" of teaching. Their ambivalence reflects an incomplete socialisation into the teaching profession, leaving open the possibility of movement into stronger positional and relational autonomy.

### 5.3.1 Summary

To sum up, the survey data and the TCIA data show that between 40 and 48% of students entered the B Ed degree seeking teacher knowledge for the purpose of teaching. A significant proportion (40-56%) have reservations. They have registered for a teaching degree for reasons external to the goods of the practice. They have either entered teaching to learn more in a subject or discipline included in a teaching degree; or intend to use a teaching qualification to another end.

# **Chapter 6:** The knowledge and benefits student teachers seek during their ITE

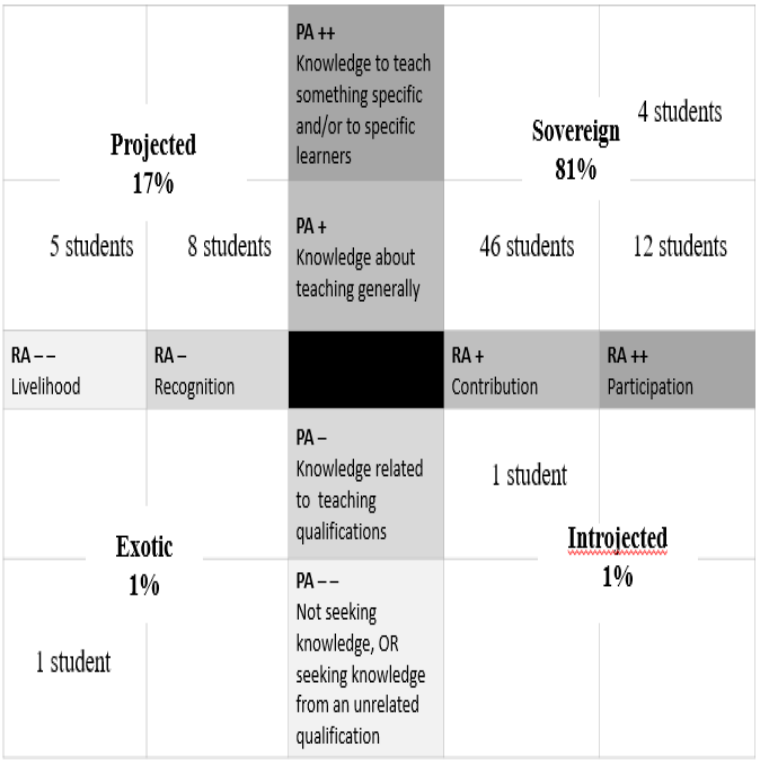
The previous chapter illustrated that just less than half of the participants in this study entered the B.Ed. degree to access educational knowledge for the purpose of having a career as a teacher. This chapter shows that these initial positions change substantially during and after their studies. First, I look at the overall distribution patterns of the knowledge and benefits participants seek during their ITE plotted across the autonomy plane. Second, I compare the pathways of those participants who started their journeys with reservations and those who started in the *sovereign code.* Third, I present my analysis of six narratives of typical and interesting journeys to teaching. I then discuss what the student teachers reported as the mechanism that led them to shift from one code to another. Finally, I consider their future aspirations, discussing their plans after attaining a teaching qualification.

### 6.1 Distribution patterns of the knowledge and benefits students seek during ITE

Figure 6.1 below shows that initial motivations are unreliable indicators of long-term commitment to teaching. Nearly all participants' positions on the autonomy plane changed over time, highlighting the formative impact of ITE on students' motivations.




At the start of their teacher preparation




During their teacher preparation

Figure 6.1 Autonomy codes enacted by students before (left) and during (right) their teacher preparation.

The data reveals a substantial reduction in the representation of participants within the *exotic code*, declining from an initial percentage of 40% to a mere 1%. Concurrently, there is a noteworthy decrease in the *Introjected code*, which started at 5% to a mere 1%. This suggests that the programmes provided by ITE significantly impacted most participants who initially were hesitant about pursuing a career in teaching or had reservations about it. Over time, their stance evolved, indicating a shift in their perspectives, underscoring the influence of ITE programmes on students' professional identities. While some students may have entered ITE with reluctance, their engagement with the knowledge imparted by ITE programmes and the internal benefits associated with the teaching profession has cultivated a genuine passion for teaching within them, allowing them to access its internal goods (MacIntyre, 2013).

Contrastingly, there was a proportional rise in the *projected code*, ascending from an initial figure of 7% to a concluding percentage of 17%. This suggests that upon completing their ITE, there exists a subset of participants who did not cultivate a sense of love and passion for the teaching profession. While they were interested in acquiring the knowledge the teaching qualification (PA+) provided, their motivation stemmed from benefits unrelated to the teaching profession (RA–).

Participant 12007 illustrates this orientation well. Though she states, “One day I would like to pursue law because I believe it’s a dream that will never go away”, she also expresses a pragmatic appreciation for teaching “I love the fact that you cannot sit at home with your qualification because there are many job opportunities.” Despite their interest in law, this participant expresses appreciation for the teaching profession; she has learned to enjoy it and seems satisfied with their current role (PA+), However, she seems to appreciate the fact that a teaching qualification provides various job opportunities, she finds value in the fact that having this qualification ensures that they won’t be confined to staying at home without employment options. This expresses that this participant is studying teaching for the benefits obtained from careers beyond the teaching profession, which is ‘job security’ enacting weaker relational autonomy.

This finding was confirmed by a different set of data. When participants responded to a survey question asking, “What do you intend to do after you qualify?” they were also required to share

their thoughts on why they chose this option after they qualified." Some of the participant's responses showed to be at the projected code. For example, Participant C said, "I plan to take up a teaching position… So that I can earn money. As I cannot afford to pay for my honours, working will help me continue part-time". Similarly, Participant D also said, "I plan to take up a teaching position…. Due to having family responsibilities, I'm a mom, and I have a responsibility towards my son to make sure he's taken care of". In both cases, the teaching profession is viewed as a means rather than an end.

Both responses indicate a shift in perspective towards the teaching profession (PA+) by the conclusion of their ITE programmes, as both express intentions to pursue teaching positions upon completing their B. Ed. degrees. However, their motivations for choosing this path suggest a focus on benefits external to the internal benefits of teaching (RA–). Both participants communicate a desire to teach primarily for financial reasons, rather than out of a genuine passion for the profession. This indicates that while they have developed an interest in teaching, their decision is primarily driven by extrinsic factors rather than an internal passion for education.

The most appearing common pattern was the participants' progressive shift from the *exotic code* to the *sovereign code*. There was a discernible augmentation in the *sovereign code*, experiencing a notable increase from 48% at the beginning of ITE to 81% during ITE. The observed shifts from the *exotic code* to the *sovereign code* suggest a transformative journey wherein participants, initially characterized by a lack of commitment and internal benefits, undergo a substantial evolution. These shifts are indicative of participants' internalization of the profession's internal logics, purposes and values.

A similar pattern was also evident from the survey data. Over 90% of participants agreed with the statement, "Despite any initial reservation, over time I have learnt to enjoy teaching" (see Figure 6.2 below). This suggests a transition from the exotic code, characterized by participants entering ITE programmes reluctantly, to the sovereign code, where they have developed a genuine love and passion for the teaching profession. Their newfound enjoyment reflects not merely emotional satisfaction but a deeper engagement with the internal goods of teaching.

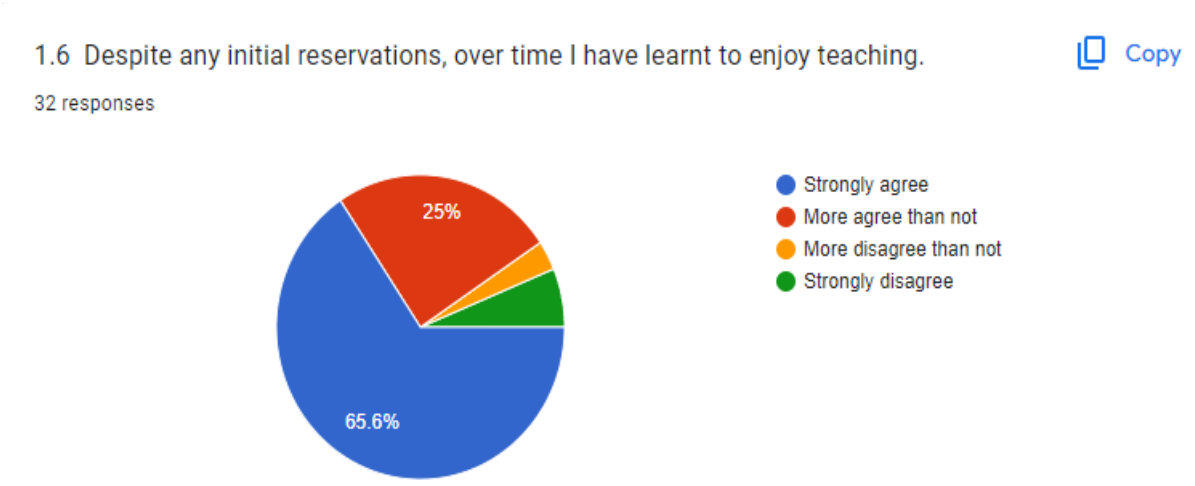



Figure 6.2: Students' reporting a firm in their affirmation of teaching.

Furthermore, qualitative response from participants further enriched this interpretation. When responding to a survey question which asked them what they intend to do after they qualify. Participant A said, "I plan to take up a teaching position... because I have a deep passion for teaching when I am in the classroom, I feel as if the worlds worries could be placed on me and I would not be bothered. My classroom is when I am in my element. Watching learners grow and nurturing that process is a rewarding feeling." Similarly, Participant B said, "I plan to take up a teaching position. I enjoy teaching and do not see myself doing anything but being in the classroom imparting knowledge to young minds."

Both these participants transitioned from the *exotic code* to the *sovereign code*, indicating a change in their motivations towards teaching. They now desired to pursue teaching careers focusing on deriving internal benefits from the teaching profession. Their statements illustrate MacIntyre (2013) concept of internal goods, how some of the internal goods of teaching manifest in the experience of student teachers through the joy of seeing learners grow, the sense of purpose derived from nurturing others, and the moral satisfaction of contributing to a shared educational mission.

### 6.1.1 Summary

To sum up, analysis of both the survey data and the TCIA data indicates that students may initially enter ITE programme with reluctance or some reservations. However, over the course of their ITE experience, many develop a passion for the teaching profession. This transformation is particularly notable, as a substantial proportion (81%) of participants

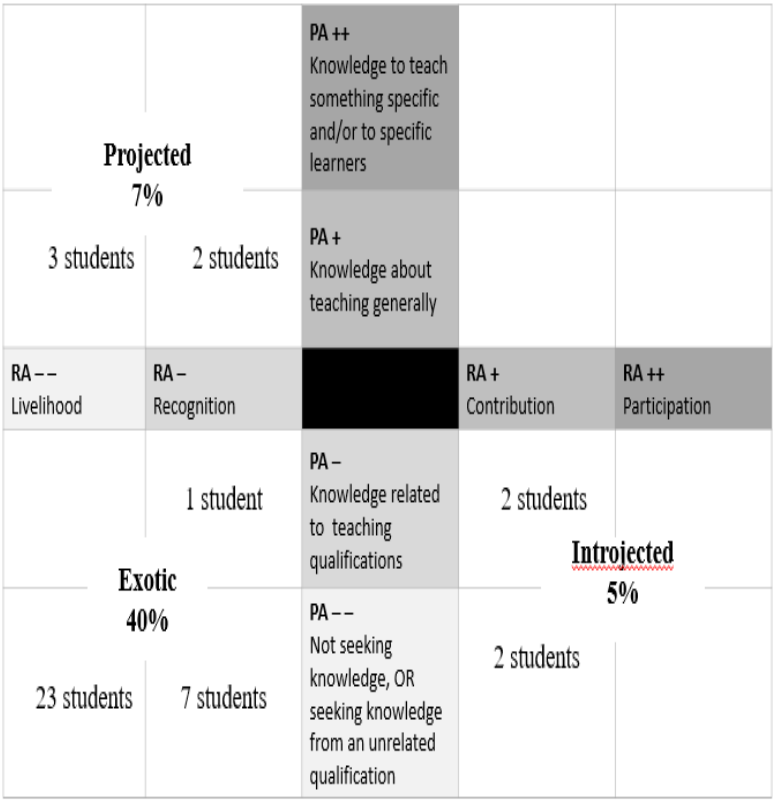
concluded their ITE journey in the *sovereign code*, indicating that they actively sought teacher knowledge (PA+) with the intention of teaching (RA+).

### 6.2 Pathways of participants who started with reservations and those who started in the sovereign code

In this section I divide participants of this study into two groups. Those who initially had some reservations (starting in *Exotic, Projected, or Introjected codes*) and those with no reservations (starting in *Sovereign code*). I compare their pathways at the start and during their ITE on the autonomy plane and look if there were shifts or not in the knowledge and benefits they seek during their teaching qualification.

#### 6.2.1 Pathways of students who had reservations at the start of their ITE

Distribution patterns on the left autonomy plane (Figure 6.3) show that more than half (52%) of the participants in this study enrolled for their B.Ed. degree reluctantly or with some reservations, reflecting a low initial commitment to teaching as a practice.




At the start of their teacher preparation




During their teacher preparation

Figure 6.3: Pathways of participants who started their teacher education with reservations.

Out of the 52% of participants who had reservations, 31 started their journey in the *exotic code*, suggesting that they were not looking for any kind of knowledge associated with the teaching profession, nor did they seek any benefits internal to the teaching practice. In MacIntyre's (2013) terms, these participants had not encountered the tradition of teaching as a moral and intellectual practice. However, their focus on knowledge other than that for teaching and their search for benefits that lies outside the mediation of knowledge might make it more challenging for them to discover its internal goods.

Five of the participants started at the *projected code* whereby they enrolled for a teaching qualification looking for knowledge associated with the teaching profession but for the benefits that are external to the practice. These students may have recognised the professional value of the B.Ed. but had not yet developed a commitment to the intrinsic purposes of teaching. A smaller group (four participants) initial started at the *introjected code*, and were either not seeking any knowledge associated with teaching or they were looking for knowledge from other disciplines that is included in the teaching qualification but for the benefits that are internal to the teaching profession.

However, the distribution pattern on the right autonomy plane (Figure 6.3) shows that major shifts occurred between how participants in this study felt about being a teacher before pursuing an ITE qualification and while they were enrolled for an ITE qualification. There was a decline in the representation within the *exotic code*, declining from 31 participants to a single participant. There was an increase in the representation of the *sovereign code*, with 31 participants now seeking knowledge about teaching for the benefits internal to the practice. While enrolled for a B.Ed. degree, most of participants shifted from expressing reservations and ambivalence towards being a teacher to a deep investment in contributing to education and participating in teacher-learning interactions.

This shift suggests that the ITE programme functioned as a formative pedagogical experience, enabling pre-service teachers to develop stronger positional and relational autonomy, that is access not just to the knowledge base of teaching, but also to its underlying values, goals and internal goods. They began to see teaching as a practice to be mastered, not just a job to be done. This pattern is theoretically significant as such a transformation marks the point at which

an individual begins to internalise the practice's logics and develop the virtues needed to pursue excellence for its own sake.

### 6.2.2 Summary

To sum up, the fact that many participants in this study started their ITE with some reservations but ended up in the sovereign code implies that student who enters ITE with extrinsic and altruistic motivation to teach can develop a passion for the teaching practice at their later stages of the ITE. This shows that relying on early motives to predict long-term commitment in the teaching profession is problematic.

## 6.3 Pathways of students who had no reservations at the start of their ITE

52% of the participants started their journeys with some reservations. Figure 6.4 below shows that 48% of the participants in this study entered their ITE programme seeking knowledge from an ITE qualification to gain benefits associated with the internal goods of teaching practice; hence, they started at the *sovereign code*. These are students who initially wanted to become teachers during their high school years.

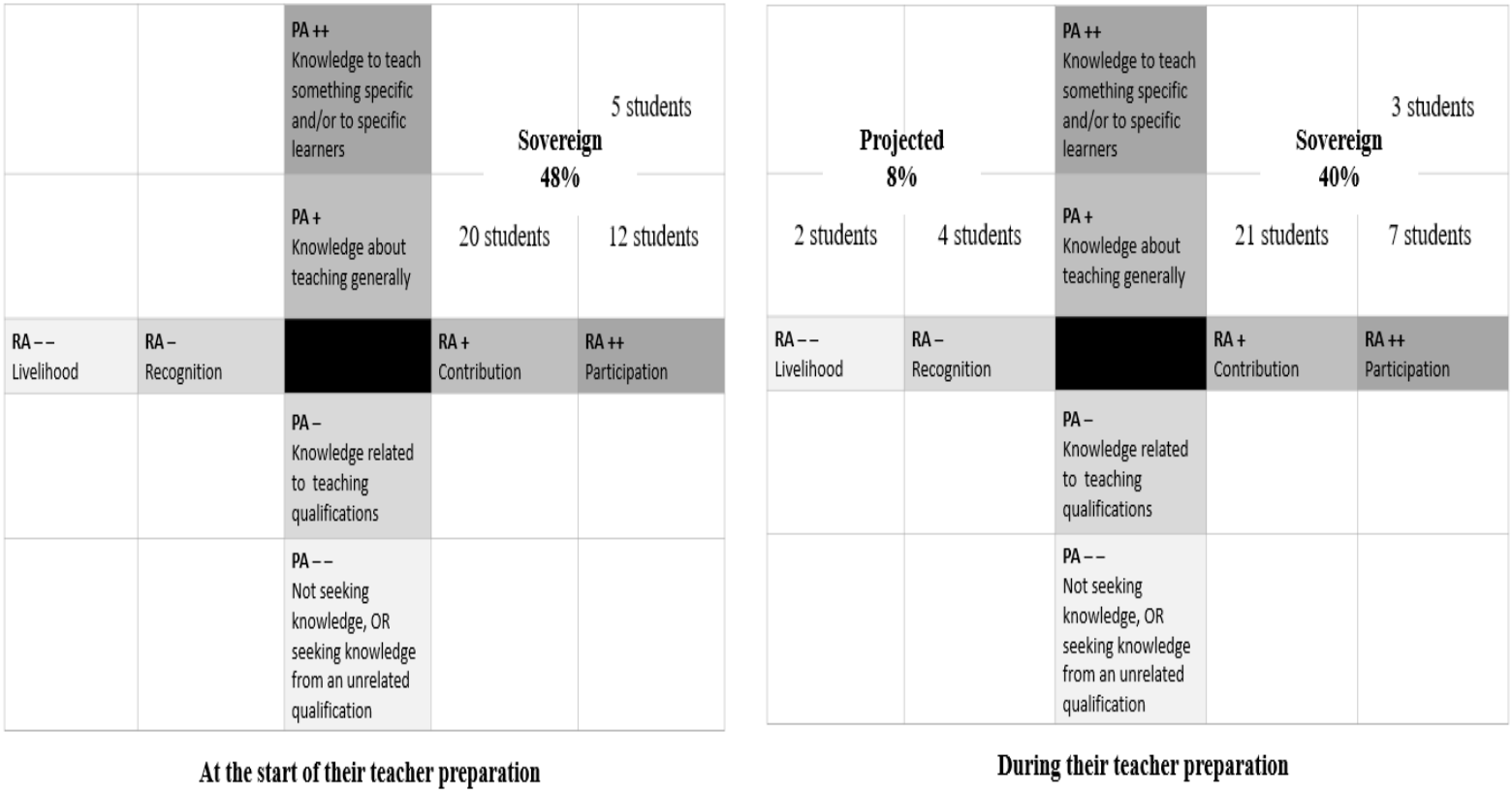



Figure 6.4: Pathways of participants who started their teacher education without reservations

Figure 6.4 shows that out of 37 participants who started their journey at the *sovereign code*, 31 remained in the same code even during their ITE. These participants remained steadfast in their desire to pursue a teaching career despite experiences that could have dissuaded them from their initial intention. They felt a sense of belonging and found resonance with the programmes offered by ITE, thereby nurturing a deeper passion for the teaching profession. Their steadfastness suggests that the ITE programme resonated deeply with their sense of purpose, likely reinforcing their pursuit of what MacIntyre (2013) refers to as the internal goods of practice. Which includes excellence in pedagogical practice, contribution to learner development and meaningful participation in a community of educators. This finding holds significant implications for debates around teacher selection criteria and for this research. These students would be admitted if acceptance is based on an aptitude test or their motivations. They are undoubtedly demonstrating their dedication to a long career in education, therefore agreeing with the assumption that those who enter teacher education with intrinsic motivation are likely to remain in the profession for longer.

However, Figure 6.4 shows that there was a small group of six students who started their journeys expressing a passion to teach but while they were enrolled for a teaching qualification, their feelings towards teaching diverted into something else. In other words, they started in the *sovereign code* and then moved to the *projected code* during their ITE. This change reflects a reorientation in their motivations and professional identity, moving from a pursuit of practice-internal goods to a focus on external benefits such as economic security or prestige. In LCT terms, while they may still pursue teaching-related knowledge, the relational autonomy has weakened. Their expressed purpose is no longer bond tightly to the core work of the profession.

For example, Participant 10705 exemplifies this shift. While he expresses continued excitement sabot becoming a teacher and pride in studying at a reputable university, he also asserts, “I think I deserve something better than teaching and teaching salary not being enough.” This student initially sought an ITE qualification to gain the internal goods of the practice (PA+ & RA+). During ITE, his or her position on the autonomy plane changed. Their emphasis is now focused more on the material benefits of teachers' work, indicating a weakening of relational autonomy (RA−) because they are seeking external goods to those of teaching practices. The participant was now seeking knowledge from a teaching qualification but for purposes unrelated to the work of teachers within the education system (PA+, RA−). This transition reflects what MacIntyre (2013) warns of: the corruption of a practice when external goods and the needs of institutions begin to dominate internal motivations.

### 6.3.1 Summary

In summary, Figure 6.4 shows that most participants who started at the sovereign code remained there, even during their ITE. However, a group of participants shifted to the projected code, looking for knowledge about teaching but for benefits external to the teaching profession (PA+, RA−). This implies that even individuals with intrinsic motivations to teach may be discouraged from pursuing a teaching career. The number of participants in this group was quite minimal. Their presence adds weight to the notion that relying on early motives to predict long-term commitment in the teaching profession is unreliable.

## 6.4 Case studies of interesting journeys

In this section I look at the case studies of their significant journeys during their ITE's start and end. I chose these case studies because they either typify a general pattern or something interesting because they are unusual. I look at those who stayed at the same code and moved between quadrants.

### 6.4.1 Journeys that stay in the same code

Among the participant cohort in the *Teacher Choices in Action* module dataset, 42% maintained their initial enrolment code throughout their ITE journey. Specifically, 30 participants (40%) began their ITE programme in the *sovereign code* and remained in that code. Conversely, only one participant (1%) started and remained in the *exotic code* and one in the *projected code* respectively. Below are detailed case studies of participants who stayed in the same code: one that started at the *sovereign code* and remained there (Zekhethelo); one that came in reluctant and struggled to find their footing within it (S'nalo); and one that was forced to do a degree in something they didn't like and never learned to like it (Samuel). I chose these case studies because they provide in-depth insights into participants' experiences within specific codes.

#### Zekhethelo's journey to teaching

Zekhethelo's narrative offers a clear and compelling example of a student who began and remained situated within the *sovereign code* throughout her ITE journey, as shown in Figure 6.5. When she enrolled for ITE, she was looking for knowledge to teach "illiterate people" (PA++), indicating that her interest in education was not general but targeted and subject-specific literacies. At the same time her drive was underpinned by (RA++) as she wanted to reduce the number of people "who struggled academically". This was driven her experiences during her schooling days, which included "being in contact with a person who struggles to

read and write." Seeing her peers being illiterate always "broke her heart". Eventually, when she "started helping out peers who needed help" in her school by tutoring them and seeing the "outcomes" that she produced, this made her to actually "start thinking about enrolling in a teaching career."

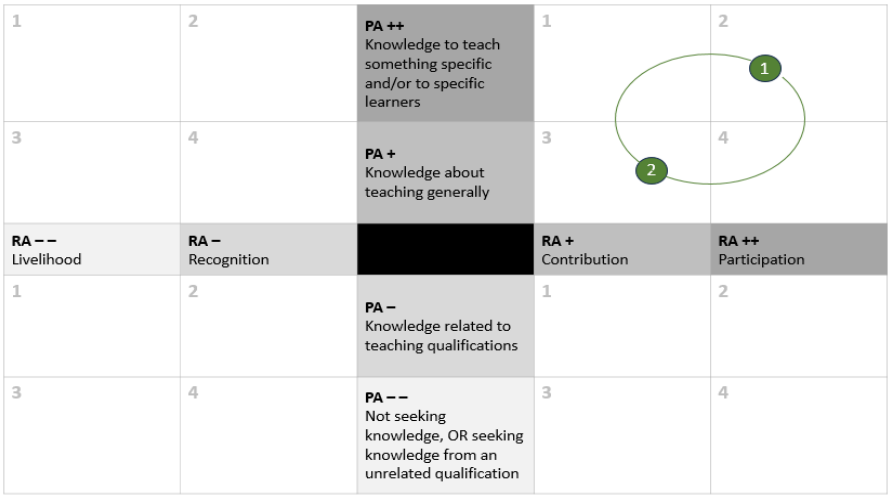



Figure 6.5: An autonomy 'stay' in Zekhethelo's journey to teaching.

After being exposed to programmes offered by ITE, Zekhethelo remained in the *sovereign code* (see Figure 6.5). She continued to seek knowledge about teaching (PA+) for benefits internal to the practice (RA+). She mentions that through being exposed to some of the programmes, she "now understand a few basics about teaching," and she "love the career" (PA+), which indicates that she was still looking for knowledge about teaching. Zekhethelo further states that she is "more than ready to take teaching as a career" and she is "loving what she is about to offer to the future learners" (RA+), indicating that she can't wait to be in the workplace environment and deliver content to learners. This indicates being passionate about the teaching practice for its own sake which is to teach.

Zekhethelo's journey highlights a significant aspect of ITE programmes. It underscores that participation in such programmes can reinforce a genuine passion for the teaching profession, wherein individuals actively seek knowledge about teaching for the internal benefits inherent to the practice. Zekhethelo's experience demonstrates that ITE programmes have the potential to reinforce a sense of belonging and purpose, instilling a deeper passion for teaching within participants. This suggests that ITE programmes play a crucial role in nurturing aspiring teachers and equipping them with the enthusiasm and commitment needed to excel in their

profession. This supports the sociological claim that learning a practice involves progressive participation and socialisation (MacIntyre, 2013; Rusnyak & Bertram, 2021).

**S'nalo's journey to teaching**

S'nalo started her B.Ed. degree in the *projected code,* as shown in Figure 6.6. While at high school, S'nalo never considered teaching as a career that she would pursue one day, as she states that it "never crossed my mind that I could take teaching as a career." However, following the advice that she got from her teachers when applying she "putted teaching as one of [her] career choices without any consideration of what [she] really wanted." This indicates that S'nalo initially enrolled in the ITE with some reservations about becoming a teacher. The fact that she took advice from her teachers and chose to enrol for ITE indicates that she was looking for knowledge about teaching which suggests PA+. However, she mentions that the reason she decided to enrol for ITE is that "it was cleared to me that teaching is less demanding career and employment is guaranteed." She saw the B.Ed. degree as a vehicle for securing employment, rather than as a pathway to engage in the intrinsic values of teaching. This indicates that S'nalo was looking for knowledge about teaching, but for benefits not internal to the profession indicating (RA– –).

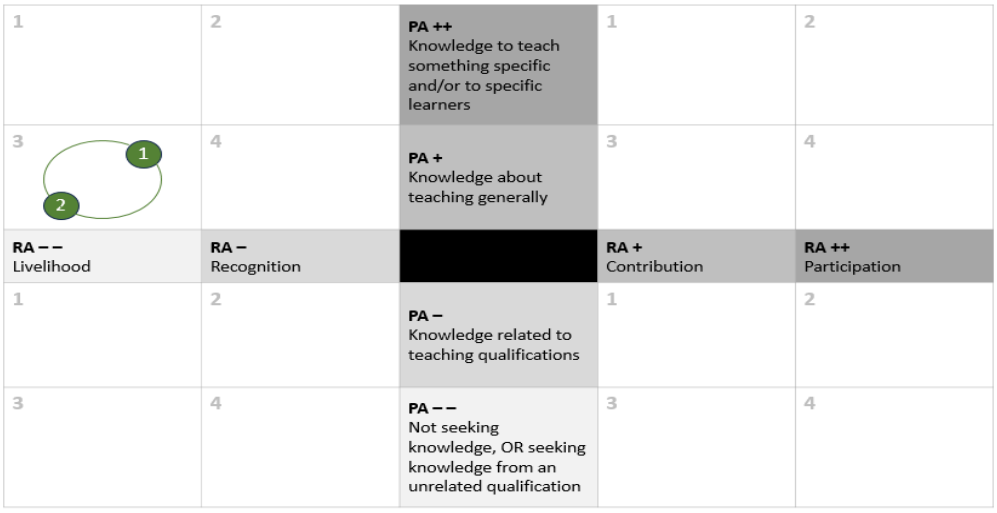



Figure 6.6: An autonomy 'stay' in S'nalo's journey to teaching.

Despite the course content and experiences in the classroom offered to S'nalo by the B.Ed. degree, she remained in the *projected code* (see Figure 6.6). Even after interacting with these programmes, she still misses the 'hook' about teaching as she said, "I feel like there is something missing for me to consider teaching as a career". This indicates that she is still

reluctant about becoming a teacher. In LCT terms, her relational autonomy remains relatively weak, as she still views teaching in utilitarian terms rather than as a calling or craft worthy of sustained involvements (RA– –).

However, her acknowledgement that, "if I can be able to study more, I will find the hook" suggests that S'nalo have not yet discovered the internal goods of the practice, but she intends to try it. This reflects a desire to seek stronger positional autonomy as she continues to seek teaching-related knowledge, indicating that she does not reject the profession entirely but has yet to internalise its logics. S'nalo's journey highlights the complexities and challenges individuals may face in navigating ITE programmes, including initial reservations, external influences on career choices, and ongoing exploration of personal motivations for entering the teaching profession. She is hovering at the periphery of the practice, engaging in its activities but without perceiving their moral or aesthetic richness.

**Samuel's journey to teaching**

Samuel is a participant who was forced to do a degree in something he didn't like and never learned to like it. He started his ITE in the *exotic code*, a code representing when someone is not looking for any knowledge about teaching (PA– –), nor benefits associated with the profession (RA– –). Samuel grew up in a family of teachers as his mother and father were teachers. However, he never saw himself as a teacher because of his "personality." He regarded himself as a very "shy, impatient and an emotional individual," therefore not fit for a career like teaching. Because he was from a family of teachers, his parents forced him to pursue a career in teaching, which he didn't like, and never saw himself as a teacher. He stated, *"*My journey into the teaching forum was honestly entirely influenced by my parents." This indicates that when he enrolled for ITE, he was not looking for any knowledge about teaching (PA– –); hence, it was not his decision to enrol for the B.Ed. degree but a decision that was taken by his parents on his behalf. He further stated that he was never really passionate about teaching but thought it was "cool" because of the "short hours" that teachers work and the "lengthy holidays" teachers receive. Both these benefits are not internal to the teaching practice, enacting a weaker relational autonomy (RA– –).

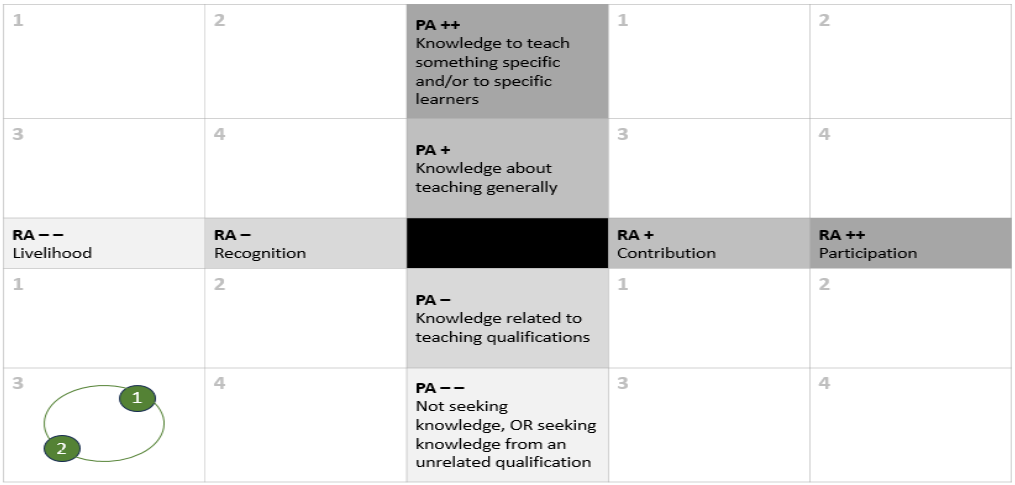



Figure 6.7: An autonomy ‘stay’ in Samuel’s journey to teaching.

After being exposed to programmes offered by ITE, Samuel never learned to like the teaching profession; hence, he stayed on the *exotic code*. Even if he earned the B.Ed. degree, he is still unsure if he “want to go back to high school to teach”. When he reflects on bad memories that he had with teachers while he was a learner that “demotivates [himself] from wanting to become a teacher”, and his heart is still in the law career that he was always passionate about and not the teaching profession that was chosen for him by his parents, indicating both PA– – and RA– –. Drawing on MacIntyre’s perspective, this suggests a failure to internalise the practice-specific virtues and telos that are ideally cultivated through sustained participation in a complex social practice such as teaching. Samuel's journey underscores the importance of autonomy and genuine interest in shaping career decisions. It highlights the potential consequences of pursuing a profession that does not resonate with one's interests or values, and the challenges of overcoming external pressures in determining one's career path.

#### 6.4.1.1 Summary

It was apparent that most participants who initially began their journey in the *sovereign code* maintained their enrolment in this code throughout their academic trajectory, continuing until their final year. However, many who initially started in the *exotic code* and *projected code* eventually transitioned from these codes into the *sovereign code.* This indicates that participants who initially began their journey in the *sovereign code* felt a sense of belonging and found resonance with the programmes offered by ITE, thereby nurturing a deeper passion for the teaching profession. Conversely, individuals who initially started in either the *exotic code* or *projected code* gradually developed a passion for teaching over time as they were

exposed to the programmes offered by ITE. As a result, we observe a transition among these participants towards the *sovereign code* as they became more invested in and committed to the teaching profession.

### 6.4.2 Journeys that shifted between quadrants

#### 6.4.2.1 One way

Out of 77 (100%) participants from the *Teacher Choices in Action* dataset, 22 participants (28%) took a one-way trip from one code to another. 14 participants (18%) did a direct trip into the *sovereign code* from the other three codes, three participants (4%) started at the *exotic code* and shifted to the *projected code* and five participants (6%) shifted out of the *sovereign code* to the *projected code*. The predominant pattern observed among participants in this cohort includes that a considerable number (14 participants) initially enrolled in ITE programmes under the categories of *exotic code*, *projected code* and *introjected code*, indicating initial reluctance towards teaching as a profession. However, following their exposure to ITE programme offerings, a significant transformation occurred. Many participants developed a genuine passion for the teaching profession. This transformation is characterized by a shift towards actively seeking knowledge about teaching (PA+) and recognizing the internal benefits associated with the profession (RA+). Consequently, most of these participants transitioned to the *sovereign code*, indicating a firm commitment to the teaching profession and a strong alignment with its internal goods. Below I look at a case study of a participant (Neo) who initially didn't want to be a teacher but through interaction with some of the courses offered by the ITE programmes made a vertical shift upward to the *sovereign code.*

**Neo's journey to teaching**

Neo started his journey in the *introjected code* (see Figure 6.8): a code where a student seeks benefits derived from the practices of teaching (RA+), but through means other than an initial teacher education qualification (PA–). In this quadrant, students seek the internal goods and moral fulfilment of a profession, but do not initially value or seek the specific, codified knowledge of that field. Neo never saw himself as a teacher one day, stating, "I never dreamt of becoming a teacher….it never crossed my mind." This indicates that he was not looking for teaching-related knowledge (PA– –) when he initially enrolled for the B.Ed. degree. However, he sought benefits internal to the teaching profession as he stated, "I had always wished to become a nurse and help sick people of all kind." This indicates that Neo wanted to contribute to society through nursing; however, because he was no offered a place at nursing college, he decided to fulfil his desire through education (RA+). This aligns with MacIntyre's (2013) view

that individuals are drawn to practices because of the virtues and social benefits embedded within them.

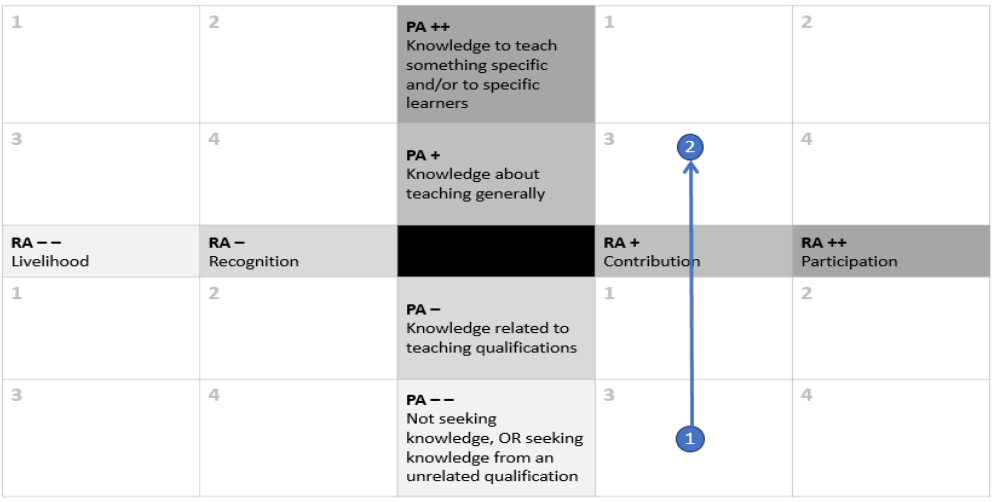



Figure 6.8: Autonomy Tours in Neo's journey to teaching.

After being exposed to the *"Being a Teacher"* course offered by one South African university's ITE programmes, Neo claims that this course made him develop a new gaze about teaching, stating, "this course opened my mind." Neo automatically moved into the *sovereign code*, as through the course, he realised that he could also contribute to the society via teaching by "bringing transformation to young lives to becoming more meaningful and responsible human kind". He then started looking for knowledge about teaching (PA+) for benefits internal to the teaching profession, such as obtaining the B.Ed. degree, "to bring change" in his community as he believes that through transforming the young lives, he would be "decreasing high crisis like crime rates and drug abuse." His case underscores a central argument of this study that initial motivations are not fixed determinants of long term teacher commitment. Rather, they can be transformed through pedagogical rich, morally resonant experiences in ITE.

### 6.4.2.2 Detour

From 77 (100%) participants in the *Teacher Choices in Action* module dataset, 23 participants (30%) took a detour. An autonomy tour is characterised by a participant going through three different codes on their journey to teaching. There were 14 participants (17%) who started at the *exotic code*, went to another code and ended up in the *sovereign code*; two participants (3%) who that started at the *exotic code*, went to another code and ended up in the *projected code*; one participant (1%) who started at the *exotic code* went to another code and ended up in the *introjected code*; two participants (3%) who started in the *sovereign code*, went to another

code and ended up in the *sovereign code*; two participants (3%) who started at the *sovereign code*, went to another code and ended up in the *projected code;* and 2 participants (3%) who started in the *introjected code*, went to another code and ended up in the *sovereign code*.

Below, I discuss in detail, a scenario of participant who took a detour in their journey to teaching: one who never wanted to be a teacher but fell in love with teaching, however through being exposed to internal goods of the teaching practice; however, through being exposed to programmes offered by ITE, he started to doubt his choice on becoming a teacher (S'thandile). S'thandile's journey illuminates the dynamic interplay between personal experiences, external influences, and evolving perceptions of teaching. It highlights the transformative power of hands-on experiences in shaping career aspirations while highlighting the importance of aligning expectations with the realities of the profession.

**S'thandile's journey to teaching**

S'thandile embarked on her journey in the *exotic code* (see Figure 6.10 below), expressing that "the journey to become a teacher was never in my mind." This highlighted her initial lack of consideration for a career in teaching, indicating that the idea never crossed her mind. This sentiment was evident in her post-matriculation decisions, as she opted to pursue a "BSc degree" and successfully completed it.

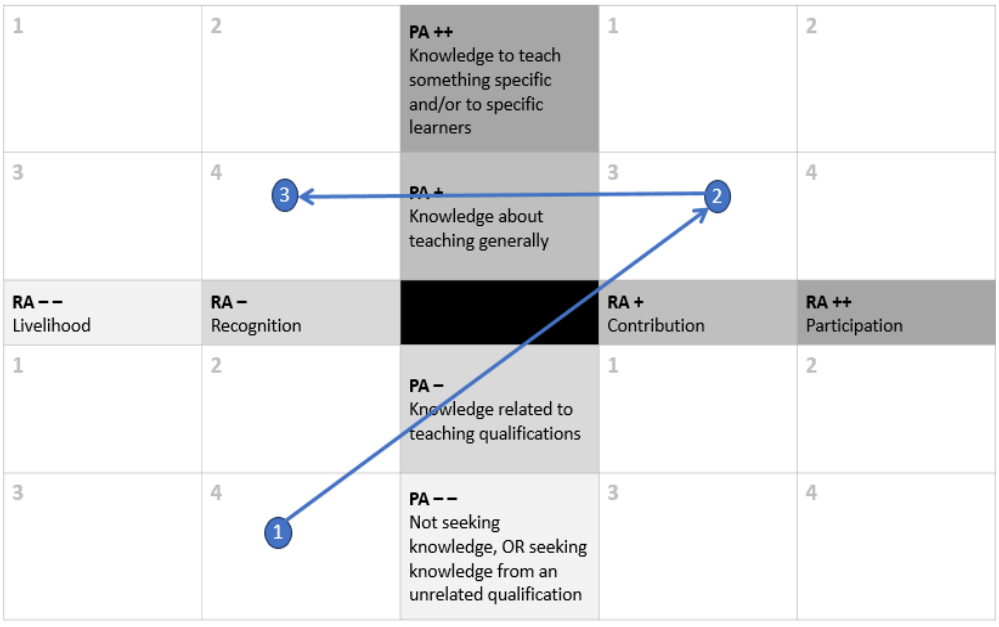



Figure 6.10: Autonomy Tours in Sthandile's journey to teaching.

She embarked on a new phase of her journey following the completion of her BSc degree transitioning into the *sovereign code*, driven by exposure to the internal benefits of the teaching profession. Reflecting on her pivotal experience, she recounted, “Around 2017, I started helping high school pupils with their school work," illuminating the profound impact of this tutoring endeavour. Witnessing the joy and satisfaction of students achieving academic success ignited her passion for teaching, as she derived immense fulfilment from their progress. The transformative power of tutoring became evident as it influenced her decision to pursue a four-year B.Ed. degree. Despite the option of pursuing a PGCE, her fervent passion for teaching and her insatiable hunger for pedagogical knowledge led her to prioritize a comprehensive educational journey. She expressed, "Even though I had a degree, I did not mind studying 4 years" underscoring her unwavering commitment to acquiring the skills and expertise necessary to excel in her chosen profession.

Following her enrolment in the B.Ed. degree programme, S’thandile transitioned from the *sovereign code* to the *projected code*, signalling a shift towards reluctance regarding her aspiration to become a teacher. Her experience with *"Teaching Experience,"* a component of ITE programmes, contributed to her diminishing passion for the profession. S’thandile's realization that her preconceived notions about teaching did not align with the realities of the profession led to disillusionment, as she expressed, "I thought to become a teacher I need a qualification, but it is not that way." This revelation holds significance as it highlights the potential for individuals to undergo a decline in passion for teaching when confronted with the internal aspects of the practice. This insight is theoretically significant, it demonstrates that exposure to internal goods may initially foster commitment, but sustained motivation also requires alignment between those goods and the lived realities of the profession (Rusznyak & Bertram, 2021).

This transition is not merely an individual crisis, but speaks to the fragility of commitment when initial enthusiasm is not matched by practical conditions of enactment. The complexity and emotional labour encountered during the teaching practicum appear to have unsettled her earlier convictions. Her case exemplifies how identity development in teacher education is not guaranteed by exposure alone, but depends on ongoing support, mentorship and the structuring of practicum in ways that scaffold student agency and understanding.

#### 6.4.2.3 Summary

In this cohort of participants, two notable trends emerged. First, a considerable number (21%) initially lacked the desire to pursue teaching, commencing their ITE at the *exotic code*. However, upon engaging with ITE programmes, they cultivated a passion for teaching, ultimately transitioning to the *sovereign code*. This observation underscores the transformative power of exposure to the internal benefits of a profession, wherein individuals gradually assimilate its norms and values, leading to a genuine affinity for the practice. Second, few participants (3%) initially wanted to be teachers when they enrolled for the B.Ed. degree but lost passion for the practice when they started being exposed to the ITE programmes.

### 6.5 Mechanisms for shift

In this section, an analysis is conducted on the reasons participants provided for the observed code shifts, as identified through the analysis. Table 6.1 summarises these reasons, specifically focusing on participants who experienced a code shift and for whom the mechanism could be extracted from their responses. Out of the factors that emerged from the data, some of these had to do with experiences in the field of practice, some had to do with learning during the teacher preparation programme, and others reside outside of the field of teaching. It is important to note that some participants exhibited multiple mechanisms for the code shift.

Table 6.1: Mechanisms that caused participants to shift from one code to another.

| Mechanism | Number of students |
|---|---|
| Experience of tutoring | 31 (41%) |
| Interaction with teachers | 21 (28%) |
| Insight from theory | 13 (17%) |
| School based teaching experience | 04 (5%) |
| Personal experiences | 03 (4%) |
| Community concern | 03 (4%) |
| Way out of poverty | 01 (1%) |
| **Total:** | **76** (100%) |

The data presented in Table 6.1 reveals three highly significant mechanisms, each cited by many participants as the reason for their code shift in their journey towards teaching. Firstly, the analysis reveals that the primary reason for the code shift, as reported by 31 participants (41%), was the *"experience of tutoring."* Participants who initially expressed a lack of interest in pursuing teaching as a career discovered its intrinsic value through embodied pedagogical practice. Participant 31483 reflection "At times, teachers would call me to the front to teach a chapter which I seemed to be understanding better than everyone in class. That is how I found that teaching is certainly for me and had no way but to follow my passion and do what I love." This finding underscores the transformative power of hands-on teaching experiences, particularly through tutoring, in shaping individuals' career aspirations towards teaching. From an LCT perspective, having the experience of tutoring others served as an encounter with the internal goods of the teaching practices, where participants first encountered the professional logic of teaching and recognised its moral and social value.

Secondly, a significant subgroup of participants (28%) cited *"interaction with a teacher"* as a pivotal factor in their code shift. Within this cohort, participants recounted positive interactions with their teachers, which ignited their passion for the teaching profession and fuelled their desire to give back to future generations. For example, Participant 20400 shared a poignant experience "There is a teacher that I will never forget in life, like he did a lot for me. I was not a mathematician but made me one of the best mathematics learners at school. The love that he gave me since I was not capable of solving mathematics problems and teach me step by step until when I became a better mathematics problem solver. That made me like becoming a teacher as I want to share that caring and love to the upcoming generation like what my secondary school mathematics teacher did to me". Others developed their passion through exposure to the day-to-day work of teachers. Participant 23142 elaborated: "From grade 10, things took a different turn. I became more informed about teaching (the behind the scenes of it all). How teachers prepare lesson plans, having to go to workshops, the marking of scripts, attending meetings etc. I fell in love with teaching."

These accounts underscore the profound impact that positive interactions with teachers can have on individuals, inspiring them to pursue teaching to impart knowledge, care, and guidance to future generations. Additionally, exposure to the intricacies of the teaching profession played a crucial role in shaping participants' passion and commitment to teaching. This mechanism is theoretically significant for two reasons. Firstly, it illustrates the power of social interaction through the personal experiences with practicing teachers. This has the potential to anchor

participants' later decisions. Secondly, it highlights the role of early socialisation into professional norms, even before formal ITE begins.

Lastly, 13 participants (17%) cited *"insight from a theory"* for their code shifts. They reported that engagement with university coursework and theory shifted their understanding of the work of teaching. This subset of students initially entered ITE with reservations and reluctance towards teaching. Participant 20333 articulated this sentiment: "I never dreamt of becoming a teacher. It never really crossed my mind that I could one day stand before learners as a teacher and lead the class …. the *Becoming a Teacher* course has opened my mind, I now discovered that I am having a huge task ahead of me of bringing change to young lives." Similarly, Participant 20351 expressed, "It seems to have been fate for teaching was my last choice but I ended up getting an offer in it …. even though teaching was my last choice I have come to love and enjoy it in my first year of studying it. I think this is because I now have a new perception about the teaching profession and I have gained knowledge about how to deal with troublesome learners without punishing them from *Education 1*." However, their perspectives evolved through interaction with certain courses offered by the participants' ITE provider, leading to a newfound passion for the teaching profession.

This finding underscores the importance of theoretical understanding in influencing individuals' attitudes towards teaching, demonstrating how exposure to theoretical frameworks can inspire passion and commitment towards the profession. Teaching is a practice requiring an organised body of knowledge and not just interpersonal skills or goodwill (Morrow 2007). Students work with critiquing their own assumptions about teaching and are introduced to the idea of teaching as a practice informed by knowledge bases, including content and pedagogical content knowledge.

Another noteworthy finding involves a small number of participants (5%) who cited *"school-based teaching experience"* as a reason for their code shifts. Teaching Experience, or work-based learning, is offered by all ITE institutions to provide pre-service teachers with practical learning opportunities within school environments. In their responses, participants highlight the positive impact of their experiences in school settings on their decision to pursue teaching. Participant 18550 stated, "Being in a school environment during teaching experience, where teachers are kind, committed to their work, encouraged me into taking this journey of becoming a teacher". Similarly, Participant 20358 also said: "Being to the teaching experience made the becoming a teacher experience more exciting. I figured ways that can help all learners stay

focused and developed different methods of teaching them 'learner' in order to reduce the high rate of dropouts." These statements reveal that despite initial reservations, participants were inspired to develop a passion for the teaching profession through their practical experiences in school settings. The school environment acted as a site of professional induction, allowing them to see, feel and experience the realities of teaching. This underscores the significant role of teaching experiences in shaping attitudes towards teaching and fostering commitment to the profession.

Similar patterns were also evident in the survey. When responding to the survey question which asked, "What reasons best describe why, despite any initial reservations, you have stayed on to complete your B.Ed. degree?", most of the participants who were in their fourth year stated that "being in the classroom during teaching experience" (23 responses) and "the nature of the university based coursework" (14 responses) made them stay on to complete their B.Ed. degree (as shown in Figure 6.11 below). This further indicates that despite initial reluctance towards the teaching profession, exposure to knowledge about teaching through university coursework (PA+) and experiencing the internal benefits of teaching practice by being in a classroom (RA+) can significantly influence students' commitment to the teaching profession. This alignment suggests that enduring commitment is not merely a matter of entering ITE with the right motives. Rather, it is shaped and solidified through access to structured knowledge, affective professional relationships, and participation in the teaching community.

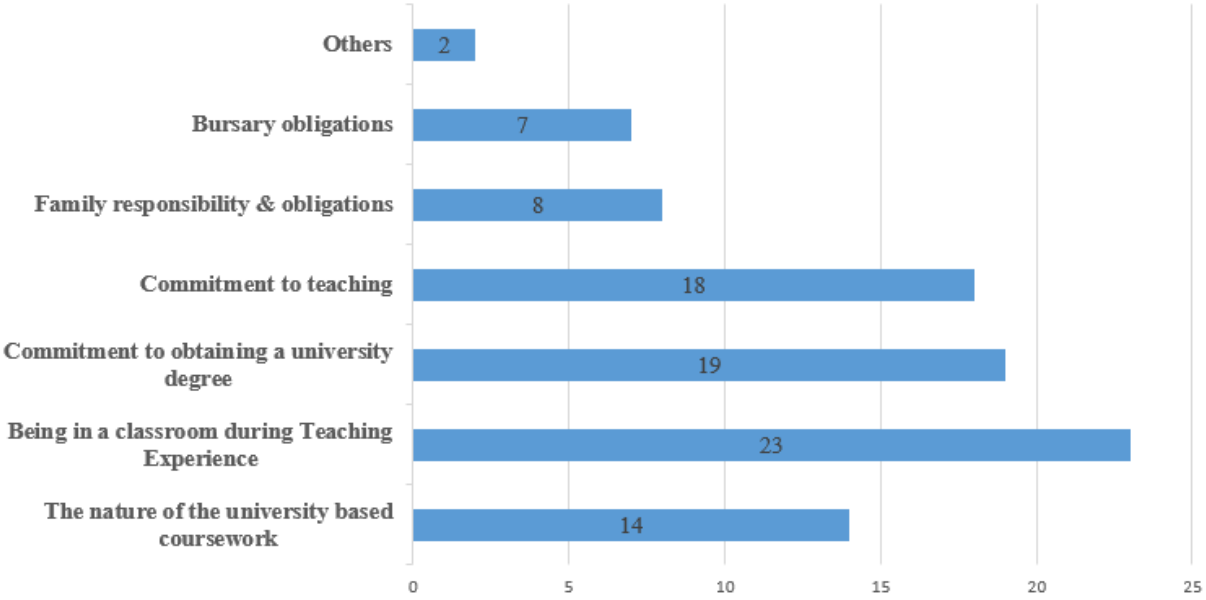


Figure 6.11: Bar graph showing mechanisms that cause participants to stay in the B.Ed. programme despite their initial reservations.

### 6.5.1 Summary

This section has highlighted that participants may initially enter the teaching profession with reluctance. However, they develop a new perspective through their engagement with the practice's internal goods and understanding of its intricacies. This newfound *"gaze"* allows them to appreciate the teaching profession for its own sake. These mechanisms lead them to perceive the teaching profession differently from how they initially viewed it upon enrolment in ITE. Most of the prominent mechanisms for code shifts identified in the dataset, such as *interaction with teachers*, *experience of tutoring*, *insight from theory*, and *school-based teaching experience*, are internal goods associated with the teaching practice. They are unique to the profession and contribute to shaping individuals' perceptions and aspirations within it.

## 6.6 Beyond initial teacher education

This section examines the participants' long-term career aspirations and intentions. The TCiA dataset solely comprised narrative data collected during ITE, so the participants' long-term goals were not initially evident. However, through a survey conducted at the end of the ITE, I gained insights into the participants' aspirations for the future.

When responding to the survey question about their intentions after qualifying, only two distinct responses emerged from the 32 participants (100%) who responded (see Figure 6.12 below). About half (53%) expressed eagerness *"to take up a teaching position"* upon qualification. When asked to share their thought on why they have chosen this option, Participant X said, "I want to utilize the pedagogical knowledge I gained to change learners' lives so they can be better societal members, improving our country's education rate." Participant Y also said, "I plan to take up a teaching position because I have a deep passion for teaching…when I am in the classroom I feel as if the worlds worries could be placed on me and I would not be bothered. My classroom is when I am in my element. Watching learners grow and nurturing that process is a rewarding feeling."

This indicates that throughout their ITE journey, this cohort of students has developed a profound love for the teaching profession and a strong passion for it. Consequently, their primary aspiration after obtaining their qualification is to enter the workforce and begin teaching (PA+, RA+). In terms of MacIntyre's (2013) framework, this reflects an embrace of

the internal goods of the teaching practice where those purposes and virtues can only be fully appreciated through active participation and moral commitment to the profession.

This is significant because it highlights how participation in ITE, particularly when mediated by meaningful experiences with *significant others*, can cultivate stronger autonomy codes over time. It supports the argument that motivations are not fixed at entry but are subject to transformation through structured engagement with the practice of teaching.

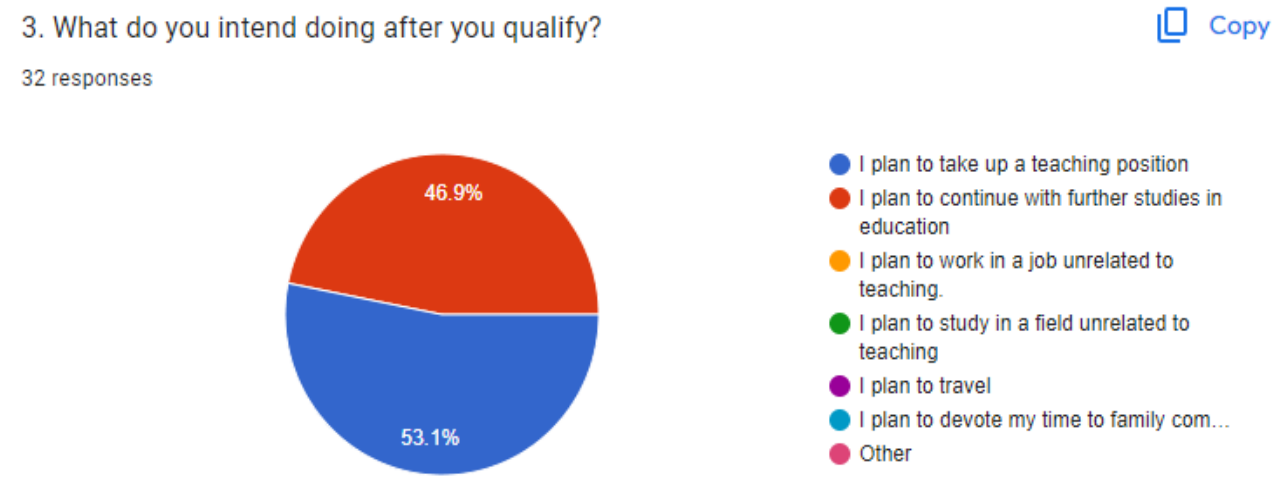



Figure 6.12: Students' reporting on what they intend to do upon qualification.

Conversely, another group of participants (47%) indicated their intention *"to continue with further studies in education".* When they were asked to elaborate on why they had chosen this option, Participant K said, "I plan on furthering my studies in education because I believe that I can make a bigger contribution to education at the top as an educational researcher not a teacher, I love teaching but I want to be the guy who is part of the curriculum planning and advancing the standard of our education." Participant L also said, "I would really like to become a part of the curriculum changers at a higher level that will ensure that what is taught in the classroom is inclusive of every learner and no one gets left out. I feel like as much as we teachers in the classroom try to implement ways of inclusivity our curriculum still limits us and we end up trying to teach learners other aspects of which their curriculum doesn't recognise, therefore it's important that these two align." Both these participants, through this pursuit, seek to deepen their knowledge about teaching (PA+) to contribute to the profession through research endeavours (RA+). This reflects their commitment to ongoing professional

development and their desire to make meaningful educational contributions through scholarly inquiry.

These aspirations echo my conception of practices, in which participations in a practice overtime allows individuals to progress from novices to informed contributors, capable of engaging not only in the execution of the practice but also in its redefinition and renewal. Participant K and L are thus not merely remaining within the boundaries of their original motivations. They are redefining their professional identities to include roles such as educational researcher, curriculum planner, and policy advocate. These roles that demand not only practical knowledge but a deep grasp of the theoretical, ethical and social dimensions of education.

### 6.6.1 Summary

To sum up, this section has shown that while many of the participants in this study enrolled for ITE, having some reservation, there were significant shifts in motives. They seem to have developed a passion for the profession. This is evident when they were asked what they intend to do after graduating; all their responses showed that they want to contribute and participate in the education sector, with 53% of them stating that *'they want to take a teaching position*' upon completing their B.Ed. degree and 47% stated they want to *'further their studies in education'*. This further indicates that relying on early motives to predict long-term commitment to teaching is unreliable.

# **Chapter 7:** Discussion

Given that there is a public discourse in which initial motivation and commitment are being suggested as grounds for admission into teacher education programmes, the purpose of this study was to interrogate the assumption empirically and to investigate whether initial motivations predict long-term commitment in the teaching profession. This study used a sociological lens to compare how preservice teachers position themselves in relation to teaching before and during their teacher preparation. Autonomy pathways from Legitimation Code Theory (LCT) have shown that more than half (52%) of participants began teacher education reluctantly or with some reservations. However, during their teacher education, an overwhelming majority (94%) were now expressing full commitment to the quest for teacher knowledge for purposes internal to the teaching profession. My interpretation of the autonomy tour patterns indicates that initial motivations are not a reliable indicator of suitability for the teaching profession. Motivations can change over time as the participants' autonomy codes shift from one code to another during their teacher education.

## 7.1 Finding 1: More than half of the participants entered teacher education with reservations

A range of studies investigated why pre-service teachers enter teacher education, and found that first-year pre-service teachers enter teacher education with different motivations for pursuing a teaching qualification (Bergmark et al. 2018; Simonsz et al. 2023; Kwok et al. 2022; Wang et al. 2023; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). They categorise motivations as intrinsic, altruistic or extrinsic. Similarly, Moosa (2020) and Mwamwenda (2010) studies showed that in South Africa, more that 50% of first year pre-service teachers are enrolling in teacher education programmes reluctantly or with some reservations. While Moosa (2020) and Mwamwenda (2010) used a psychological lens, my study used a sociological approach in terms of how pre-service teachers were positioning themselves in terms of what knowledge (positional autonomy) and benefits (relational autonomy) they were seeking. Part of my analysis confirms the findings of these studies because it also shows that about 52% of South African student teachers come into teacher education reluctantly (see Figure 5.3). They have registered for a teaching degree because of reasons external to the goods of the practice, or have an intention of using a teaching qualification as a means to another end. They started their journeys to teaching either in the *exotic code, projected code* or *introjected code*. Additionally, when they

were responding to the survey, 56% of the participants agreed with the statement, “I had many reservations about teaching as a choice of career when I enrolled for the B Ed degree.”

### 7.2 Finding 2: Most Participants’ commitments to teaching shifted positively during teacher education

What existing research on students’ motivations did not investigate, however, was student motivations and commitment to teaching over time (e.g., Moosa, 2020; Bergmark et al., 2018; Simonsz et al., 2023; Kwok et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). They did not consider teacher education to be a potentially powerful intervention in which students’ positions can change over time. My study takes their studies further by examining whether pre-service teachers’ motivations shifted during their teacher education. Some studies argued that teacher education can positively and negatively influence pre-service teachers’ commitment to teaching (e.g., Johnston, 2010; Moses et al, 2021; Mtika, 2011; Ronessa & Smith, 2010; Tang et al., 2014). In my study, the shifts were overwhelmingly positive. When they accounted for the mechanisms that caused them to shift to different parts of the autonomy plane, 91% of the participants mentioned *interaction with teachers, experience of tutoring, insight from theory,* and *school-based teaching experience*. This suggests that the connections between the course's theoretical and practical components, as well as the pre-service teachers' experiences on campus and in schools, all had an impact on the pre-service teachers' dedication to teaching. This was also evident when participants were responding to the survey question, which asked them about their futures. All participants seemed to have developed a passion for the profession. All responses showed that they wanted to contribute to and participate in the education sector.

Although my study used autonomy pathways from LCT to analyse the extent to which pre-service teacher’s motivation shifts or remain the same during their teacher education, the findings partially support the claim that pre-service teachers who enter teaching with high motivation levels are more likely to remain committed to their careers over time (Heinz, 2015; Moosa, 2020). Most of the participants in this study who started in the *sovereign code,* seeking knowledge for teaching with the intention of deriving satisfaction from the work or contribution of being a teacher, remained there during their teacher education (see Figure 6.4). Of 48% participants who started at the *sovereign code*, 40% remained in the same code during their teacher education. However, this was not the whole picture, a few (8%) participants shifted from the *sovereign code* to the *projected code* (see Figure 6.4). These participants initially wanted to be teachers when they enrolled for the B.Ed. degree but sought other priorities when

they were being exposed to teacher education programmes. This implies that even participants with intrinsic motivations to teach initially may be discouraged from pursuing a teaching career during their teacher education. It also supports my hypothesis that motivations can change during ITE.

The findings of this study also confirm the argument made by Ronessa and Smith (2010, p. 182) that "teacher education courses does not harm the motivation of future teachers, but nor does it strengthen it." This was evident in the findings as among the 77 participants included in the *Teacher Choices in Action* module dataset, 32 participants (42%) maintained their initial enrolment code throughout their ITE journey either on the *sovereign, exotic, projected* and *introjected code*. For some students in the study, teacher education confirmed their initial reluctance, but for the vast majority it provided opportunities for them to acquire a deep passion for the teaching profession.

### 7.3 Finding 3: Pre-service teachers can find a passion for teaching along the way

Studies also suggest that in the absence of initial commitment and passion, one might be inclined to assume that students entering teacher education with reservations may not have the capacity to become passionate and committed teachers (e.g., Moosa, 2020; Bergmark et al. 2018; Simonsz et al., 2023; Kwok et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2023; Manuel & Hughes, 2006). The findings of this study contradict these assumptions as it found that there may be shifts in pre-service teacher' motivations during their teacher preparation. Of the 52% of participants who entered their teacher preparation reluctantly, only 11% remained during their teacher education. 41% of this cohort shifted to the *sovereign code* (see Figure 6.3). This suggests that students who enter teacher education with extrinsic and altruistic motivations to teach can develop a passion for teaching practices at their later stages of teacher education.

### 7.4 Finding 4: Scholastic academic performance is not a reliable indicator of teacher commitment

Trevenath (2022) made a conceptual argument that in New Zealand, selection practices are driven by unfounded assumptions and political sensitivities rather than empirical research. Trevethan (2022, p. 5) argued that "selection based on academic measures is not a useful predictor of success as a teacher". Shalem, Dison and Reed (2013, p. 1075) also argued that "neither their NSC nor their NBT results were good predictors of their performance during their first year at university." The findings of this study give empirical evidence for the argument made by Trevethan (2022) that the calls to test the commitment of students wishing

to enrol for a teaching qualification before they are accepted into the teacher education program lacks a solid foundation in research and "promotes flawed logic" (p. 399). Therefore, it may not effectively identify individuals who would become effective teachers. Trevethan (2023) makes a conceptual argument, but my study provides empirical support for that data. The argument is not totally arbitrary or random. In this study, there were very define patterns of journeys that participants took around the autonomy plane.

### 7.5 Finding 5: Initial motivation and personality tests are unreliable indicators of future commitment

The findings of this study raise concerns about the validity of using initial motivation and personality tests to determine the suitability of pre-service teachers as admission criteria for an initial teaching qualification. This study provides empirical evidence that would urge teacher education providers to be cautious of recommendations made by international and South African researchers (e.g., The Oppenheimer Memorial Trust, 2023; Berejena, 2022; Al Hashmi & Klasen, 2020; Lubisi, 2012) that advocate for a range of psychometric and psycho-social approaches to assess students' initial commitment to the teaching profession. The findings of this study suggest that early motives to predict long-term commitment in the teaching profession are an unreliable indicator of future commitments because intentions and what leads to satisfaction shifts. Most of the participants' motivation in this study shifted from one code to another during their teacher education (see Figure 6.1) and it is likely that they may continue to shift even after their teacher education.

My study was based on MacIntyre's (2013) idea that a practice is ""any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realised in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence" (p. 175). MacIntyre's (2013) conception of practice suggest that the more newcomers learn about a practice and participate in its activities, the more they find meaning in those activities and the more they seek to strive for excellence. My study used MacIntyre's philosophical ideas in teacher education specifically as a practice. My study shows evidence for this in the field of teacher education as 52% of participants in this study who entered teacher education with reservations shifted to *sovereign code* after the exposure to internal goods associated with the teaching practice. This was evident when this cohort of participants was asked to account for what caused them to shift from being reluctant to *sovereign code,* they stated *interaction with teachers,* the *experience of tutoring, insight from theory,* and *school-based teaching experience* were responsible. These mechanisms of shifts may not be internal goods of the practice

themselves, but they prompt students to discover the internal goods, and so lead to a strengthening of positional autonomy and/or relational autonomy.

My study used the Autonomy Dimension in a new way. Previous studies that have used the autonomy dimension of LCT have interpreted positional autonomy (PA) as 'content' and relational autonomy (RA) as 'purpose' in the teaching of subjects like Sciences, Maths and History (Maton, 2018). In this study, the practice under examination is learning to teach, and so positional autonomy and relational autonomy manifest empirically in different ways. My translation devices show a different way that positional autonomy and relational autonomy manifest in the field of teacher education. I used positional autonomy as 'knowledge students' seek' and relational autonomy as 'benefits they seek to derive'.

To sum up, this discussion positions my findings in relation to concept arguments and empirical studies around the use of motivational testing as a predictor for the future commitment of preservice teachers. This study's findings showed that the motivations that pre-service teachers hold at the beginning of teacher education do not necessarily remain the same during their teacher education. Therefore, this suggests that such indictors are unreliable as a predictor for sustainability in teaching practice.

# **Chapter 8:** Conclusion

This study sought to investigate the knowledge/s that pre-service teachers seek and the benefits they hope to derive from that knowledge at the start and during their teacher preparation programmes. I now conclude the study by discussing how the research has addressed each research question. I also explore the implications of my findings for ITE providers and suggest areas for further research that emerged from this study. Finally, I offer a personal reflection on what the findings mean to me both as a teacher and a researcher.

This study used MacIntyre's (2005) concept of a 'practice' as socially patterned activities directed towards a shared purpose. I argued that as one learns and participates in a practice, they develop new insights and understanding of that practice, and they start striving for goods internal to that practice. I have drawn on Morrow's (2007) conception of teaching as "organising systematic learning" to argue that teaching is not merely a collection of isolated actions or skills acquired through personal experience. Its shared purpose meets the criteria as a complex practice comprising socially patterned activities that seek to design student learning opportunities. Through active participation, knowledge and interaction with others, newcomers develop a deeper understanding of the underlying logics and what constitutes excellence in practice.

Employing the Autonomy dimension from LCT, the study analysed the types of knowledge sought by 77 pre-service teachers (conceptualised as strengths of *positional autonomy*) and the benefits they hoped to derive from that knowledge (conceptualised as strengths of *relational autonomy*) before and at one point in time during their teacher preparation. The study analysed the narrative accounts of 77 pre-service teachers and the survey responses of 32 of the 77 participants, all of whom shared why they entered an initial teacher education programme and what they felt about being a teacher when starting and during their teacher education. Strengths of positional autonomy and relational autonomy can be considered together to occupy a position on the autonomy plane. Changes in positional autonomy and relational autonomy over time reveal pre-service teachers' intentions during their teacher education and the factors contributing to these shifts. Applying LCT's autonomy dimensions, I can now comprehensively answer my research questions.

### 8.1 What kinds of knowledge do students seek when enrolling in a teacher preparation programme, and what benefits do they hope to derive from that knowledge?

The concepts of positional autonomy (PA) and relational autonomy (RA) facilitated the demonstration of the knowledge and benefits sought by pre-service teachers at the start of their teacher preparation. Positional autonomy relates to the knowledge sought by pre-service teachers, and relational autonomy relates to the benefits they hope to derive from that knowledge. Varying combinations of strengths of positional autonomy and strengths of relational autonomy combined to generate codes that govern their stance about the 'internal goods' of teaching at a point in time. Analysis of their responses revealed varying strengths of positional autonomy and relational autonomy.

The findings of this study showed that the pre-service teachers in the sample entered ITE programmes seeking different knowledge: some sought benefits that could be obtained only by engaging in teaching; and others sought benefits that could be derived from a range of practices. The combination of the strengths of positional autonomy and relational autonomy revealed autonomy codes that legitimate their reasons for participating in a teaching programme. While some pre-service teachers were inclined towards acquiring teaching-specific knowledge and benefits internal to the profession (sovereign code), most showed motivations that extended beyond the immediate realm of teaching (projected, introjected, and exotic code). They enrolled for reasons external to the goods of the teaching practice, and some intended to use the teaching qualification for purposes unrelated to the practice of teaching itself. The study found that upon registration, 48% of pre-service teachers sought knowledge for teaching with the primary purpose of learning to teach. Additionally, 7% initially pursued knowledge included in the teaching degree but for purposes that lay beyond teaching. 5% were ambivalent about the knowledge they sought, focusing mainly on the benefits of obtaining a university degree. Notably, 40% of pre-service teachers enrolled in teacher education without seeking knowledge or benefits associated with the teaching profession. This indicates that ITE programmes attract a diverse array of individuals, each with unique goals and perspectives regarding their professional development.

### 8.2 What kinds of knowledge and benefits do students seek during ITE?

The findings from this study showed that even though about half of the pre-service teachers in this study enrolled for the B.Ed. Degree with some reservations, the picture changes drastically during their teacher preparation. The study found that during their studies, 81% of pre-service teachers sought knowledge for teaching with the primary purpose of learning to teach

(sovereign code). Additionally, 17% pursued knowledge included in the teaching degree for purposes beyond teaching (projected code). In comparison, while 1% remained ambivalent about the knowledge they sought, focusing mainly on the benefits of obtaining a university degree (introjected code). Only 1% of the participants in the study still did not seek knowledge or benefits associated with the teaching profession during their studies (exotic code). The progression observed among pre-service teachers throughout their ITE journey suggests a significant shift from initial reservations to the reporting of a strong dedication to teaching. Most pre-service teachers (81%) demonstrated a proactive pursuit of teaching and a firm intention to teach during their ITE programmes. Of the students in the same cohort, when responding to the online survey conducted at the end of their initial teacher education, over 90% agreed with the statement, "Despite any initial reservation, over time, I have learnt to enjoy teaching". This finding from the survey dataset is well aligned with the findings from the data obtained by the Teacher Choices in Action project.

**8.3 To what extent do the intentions of preservice teachers shift during their ITE?**

This question was designed to interrogate the widely held assumption that an initial intention to teach is an important indicator of long-term commitment, and that students who come into teaching by default are less likely to become committed teachers. The autonomy plane from LCT helped me to trace knowledge sought and perceived benefits. The findings of this study supported the claim that those who enter ITE with intrinsic motivation are likely to remain in the profession. A large group (40%) of pre-service teachers initially began their journey seeking knowledge for teaching for the purpose of teaching (sovereign code). It remained in that position through their initial teacher education. This group of pre-service teachers felt a sense of belonging and found resonance with the programmes offered by ITE, thereby nurturing a deeper passion for the teaching profession.

This was not the whole picture. The autonomy plane also showed that pre-service teachers' initial motivations may shift during their teacher education. Most pre-service teachers transitioned from one code to another during their ITE. Those who started their teacher education with some reservations (exotic code, projected code, introjected code) gradually developed a passion for teaching over time as they were exposed to the programmes offered by ITE institutions. As a result, we observe a transition among these participants towards the sovereign code as they became more invested in and committed to the teaching profession. In short, they developed a passion for teaching along the way.

Another group of pre-service teachers initially wanted to be teachers when they enrolled for the B.Ed. Degree but shifted to another code because they wanted to learn more about a specialised part of practice like educational psychology. For others, they intended to pursue an associated interest when they started being exposed to the ITE programmes and realised that classroom teaching was not for them. This implies that even pre-service with intrinsic motivations to teach may be discouraged from pursuing a teaching career. Their presence in the study adds weight to my argument that relying on early motives to predict long-term commitment to the teaching profession is unreliable.

### 8.4 What accounts for the shifts?

The thematic analysis used in this study revealed the reasons pre-service teachers provided for the observed code shifts. The study has proven that pre-service teachers' motivation shifts in their journey to teaching. This shift is caused by multiple factors including experiences in the field of practice, learning during the teacher preparation programme, and others outside of the teaching field. The biggest causes of the shifts were personal experiences of tutoring and teaching others (41%), interaction with a particular teacher or lecturer (28%) and gaining new insights into teaching from theory studies as part of their coursework (17%). These mechanisms lead them to perceive the teaching profession differently from how they initially viewed it upon enrolment in initial teacher education. Most pre-service teachers who initially entered the teaching profession with reluctance developed a new perspective through their engagement with the practice's internal goods and understanding of its intricacies.

### 8.5 Implications of the findings

The findings of this study contribute to the ongoing conversations between policymakers, the public and teacher education providers regarding the selection and admission of students into ITE programmes. This study offers empirical evidence that can shed light on claims about the admission policies into teacher education programmes. At the beginning of this study, I argued that there are calls that suggest that acceptance into teacher education programmes should be based on pre-service teachers' initial commitment to the teaching profession. The findings of this study propose that accepting pre-service teachers to initial teacher education programmes based on their initial intentions and motivations is highly unreliable. The findings showed that motivations are not constant; they shift as pre-service teachers encounter different experiences and interact with significant others. While it may be true that most of those who enter teacher education seeking knowledge for teaching are mostly likely to remain in the profession, during

their ITE programmes pre-service teachers who initially had reservations indicated their commitment and intentions to pursue a long career in teaching.

Secondly, although most pre-service teachers who entered teacher education with reservations in this study show a passion for the profession, school conditions may change their intentions. While I have argued that motivations constantly change, my study raises concern about school working conditions. It may happen that when novice teachers go back to the school environment, the working conditions might again cause shifts as they cope with the contextual realities of schooling. Therefore, further investigation is needed to see whether school working conditions might be a more significant factor leading to the high attrition of early career teachers. It is important to ensure that novice teachers work in acceptable school conditions. It is also important to support newly qualified teachers through induction programmes.

### 8.6 Suggestions for future research

This study was cross-sectional as it followed pre-service teachers over a short period. Other research design choices could reveal other different patterns. For example, a longitudinal study that follows cohorts into their first five years of teaching could reveal whether their intentions remain in sovereign codes or shift to their areas of the autonomy plane in the face of greater experience, conditions of the school/s in which they work and changes in their personal circumstances and family obligations.

### 8.7 Personal reflection

When doing this research, I was struck by the dynamic nature of pre-service teachers' motivations and how these evolve throughout their teacher education journey. As a teacher, the fact that many participants initially entered ITE with reservations but later embraced the teaching profession suggests that it is essential for me to encourage learners to explore teaching as a viable career path, even if they have doubts or uncertainties. The findings have shown that early exposure to teaching experiences, such as tutoring, can help learners discover their passion for teaching. Secondly, the findings showed that individual teachers are crucial in shaping learners' attitudes toward teaching. Positive role models in the classroom can inspire learners to consider teaching as a potential profession by demonstrating the impact and satisfaction of educating others. Therefore, inside the school, I must show enthusiasm, dedication, and expertise to motivate learners to seek the knowledge and skills necessary for teaching.

As researchers, these findings challenge the reliance on initial motivational assessments as predictors of long-term commitment to teaching. They underscore the need for longitudinal studies that track the evolution of motivations and commitment over time. This insight calls for a more nuanced approach to research methodologies, considering motivational development's complex and fluid nature. By understanding the factors contributing to sustained commitment, we can better inform the design of teacher education programmes and interventions supporting pre-service teachers throughout their professional journeys.

# **Chapter 9:** References


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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Ethical clearance certificate for the full study

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Research Office

**HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)**
R14/49 Rusznyak

| | |
|---|---|
| **CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE** | **PROTOCOL NUMBER: H19/09/47** |
| **PROJECT TITLE** | Teacher Choices in Action: South African pre-service teachers' learning from practice |
| **INVESTIGATOR(S)** | Prof L Rusznyak |
| **SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT** | Education/ |
| **DATE CONSIDERED** | 13 September 2019 |
| **DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE** | Approved<br>Risk Level: Minimal<br>Two Year Extension Only |
| **EXPIRY DATE** | 21 October 2025 |

**DATE** 22 October 2019 **CHAIRPERSON** _____
(Professor J Watermeyer)

cc: Supervisor : N/A

**DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)**

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10004, 10th Floor, Senate House, University. Unreported changes to the application may invalidate the clearance given by the HREC (Non-Medical)

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to submit an amendment of the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to completion of a regular progress report. For Minimal and Low studies, this is due annually on 31 December. For Medium and High Risk studies, this is due twice annually on 30 June and 31 December.**

_____ _____/_____/_____
**Signature** **Date**

**PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES**

# Appendix B: Ethical clearance certificate for this study

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG | WSoE Wits School of Education

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION ETHICS COMMITTEE

**CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)**

| | |
|---|---|
| **CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE** | **PROTOCOL NUMBER: 2023ECE055M** |
| **PROJECT TITLE** | Journeys to teaching of B. ED students who entered teacher education with reservations: Finding the passion along the way? |
| **INVESTIGATOR** | Bongumenzi Mthobisi Mkhabela |
| **SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR** | **WSoE** |
| **DATE CONSIDERED** | 10 July 2023 |
| **DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE** | Approved unconditionally |
| **RISK LEVEL** | MINIMAL |
| **EXPIRY DATE** | Date of submission of the Research Report |
| **ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE** | 21 July 2023 |
| **CHAIRPERSON** | Dr. Batseba Mofolo-Mbokane |

cc: Prof. Lee Rusznyak

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**DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR**

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

**Signature** **Date** 16 / 08 / 2023

# Appendix C: Deputy Registrar research permission letter

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND JOHANNESBURG

**OFFICE OF THE DEPUTY REGISTRAR**

03 October 2023

Bongumenzi Mthobisi Mkhabela (student number 1863337)
Faculty of Humanities
Wits School of Education
Master of Education by Course Work and Research Report

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN**

**"Journeys to teaching of B. ED students who entered teacher education with reservations: Finding the passion along the way?."**

This letter serves to confirm that the above project has received permission to be conducted on University premises, and/or involving staff and/or students of the University as research participants. In undertaking this research, you agree to abide by all University regulations for conducting research on campus and to respect participants' rights to withdraw from participation at any time.

If you are conducting research on certain student cohorts, year groups or courses within specific Schools and within the teaching term, permission must be sought from Heads of School or individual academics.

Ethical clearance has been obtained. (Protocol number: 2023ECE055M)

Research Expiration: (Date of submission of the Research Report)

Nicoleen Potgieter
**University Deputy Registrar**

# Appendix D: Invitation letter

Dear Student

My name is Bongumenzi Mkhabela a Master of Education student at the Wits School of Education. I'm conducting a study on students who entered teacher education with and without reservations. I'm investigating whether your coursework and experiences at in the classroom has confirmed or made you reconsider any initial reservations. I'm working under the supervision of Prof. Lee Rusznyak.

I invite you to participate in my research project, whether or not you had reservations about becoming a teacher. Your involvement would be to complete an online survey that should take 10 minutes of your time to complete.

I have been given Ethics Clearance from the University of the Witwatersrand Ethics Committee. To ensure that my research is ethical, I assure you that your personal details will never be revealed in my study. You are also able to withdraw participation at any time. You will not be renumerated for participating, but your response will contribute to a deeper understanding of journeys of pre-service teachers through teacher education programmes. **Participation in this research is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences.** If you do choose to participate, all information about you will be completely confidential and anonymous. All data (electronic and material) will be secured in a password protected database where your name and any identifying details will be anonymised. We also request whether you give your permission for your responses to be used in future studies with a research team led by Prof Lee Rusznyak.

If you are willing to participate, please complete the Informed Consent section and then respond to the questions that follow: https://forms.gle/cYVv7CkGykN8bk4e6. If there are any questions you have about this research, you may email me or my supervisor (Lee.Rusznyak@wits.ac.za).

Thank you for considering my invitation.

Yours sincerely

Bongumenzi Mkhabela (1863337)

1863337@students.wits.ac.za

# Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

## Journeys to teaching: Autonomy shifts in pre-service teachers' narratives of becoming a teacher

### Informed Consent Form

I, (Participant's full name) _____, Student number: _____

| Consent | Do not consent |
|---|---|

to participate in the above research project led by Prof Lee Ruzsnyak with Bongumenzi Mkhabela

**Do you agree to:**

| | |
|---|---|
| Complete a brief survey | YES / NO |
| Allow the survey data to be used in further studies. | YES/NO |

**I acknowledge that:**

- I have read and understood the participant information sheet
- I understand that my privacy will be maintained at all times
- I participate voluntarily, knowing that I may withdraw from the study at any time with no negative consequences

Signature: _____

Date: _____

# Appendix F: Survey Questions

**Journeys to teaching: Autonomy shifts in pre-service teachers' narratives of becoming a teacher**

| | | Strongly Agree | More Agree than not | More Disagree than not | Strongly Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A. | I had many reservations about teaching as a choice of career when I enrolled for a B Ed degree. | | | | |
| B. | If I knew at the start of my degree what I know now, I would have had fewer reservations about my choice of degree. | | | | |
| C. | I regret my decision to register for an initial teacher education degree. | | | | |
| D. | I think that teaching is a good career choice for me. | | | | |
| E. | I have acquired knowledge and skills in my initial teacher education programme that could be useful in careers other than teaching. | | | | |
| F. | Despite my initial reservations, over time I have learnt to enjoy teaching. | | | | |
| G. | I intend to finish my B Ed so that I can have a degree to my name, then I intend to study something else. | | | | |
| H | Teaching will provide me with opportunities to leave a comfortable life. | | | | |
| I. | I hope to have a long career within education | | | | |
| J. | I plan to study further in the field of education | | | | |

1.Please read through all the following statements, think about each one carefully and then respond honestly. Indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each one by placing an X in the block that best fits your thoughts.

2. What reasons best describe why, despite your initial reservations, you have stayed on to complete your B Ed degree? Please indicate by placing an X in the box that best fits your answer. You may choose more than one, if necessary.

| | |
|---|---|
| The nature of the university-based coursework. | |
| Being in the classroom during Teaching Experience. | |
| Commitment to obtaining a university degree | |
| Commitment to teaching | |
| Bursary obligations | |
| Family responsibility and obligation | |
| Other (Please elaborate) | |

3. What do you intend doing after you qualify? Please indicate by placing an X in the box that best fits your answer.

| | |
|---|---|
| I plan to take up a teaching position | |
| I plan to continue with further studies in education | |
| I plan to work in a job unrelated to teaching | |
| I plan to study in a filed unrelated to teaching | |
| I plan to travel | |
| I plan to devote my time to family commitments | |
| Other (Please elaborate) | |

3.1. Please share your thoughts on why you have chosen this option for after you qualify.