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Perceptions of the Dwindling Appeal of the Teaching Profession: A South African Case-Study

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ABSTRACT The teaching profession in South Africa has been generally viewed as a profession endowed with a prestige, honour and respect, characteristics that seem to dissipate at an alarming rate, and substituted allegedly by apathy and pessimism. Prompting the question, “has teaching lost its appeal, and what could be the underlying causes of this situation?” This question gave rise to the pursuit of this study. The paper followed a multi-method approach, that is, observations, informal discussions and a semi-structured questionnaire using clusters of variables as guided by Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT). The findings of this article based on the qualitative data collected from purposefully sampled (n=186) educators reveal that about (56%) of the older generation of educators (that is, from 51 years and above) bemoan change fatigue (that is, instability and uncertainties) contrary to their younger (that is, 21-35 years) counterpart who identified salary as their main concern with the teaching profession. Understanding current teachers’ views, needs and motivation has implications for teacher education planning and curriculum design, teacher recruitment authorities, and policy decisions.