



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG
FACULTY OF EDUCATION

Student departure from teacher education

A study of compulsory school teacher education programmes
in Gothenburg University

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Supervisors:	Silwa Claesson, Göran Brante
Examiner:	Susanne Garvis
Rapport nr:	xx (a number will be given by the administrator while handing in)

Abstract

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Aim: Utilizing the information that Gothenburg University (GU) has about the cohort of students in compulsory school TE programmes that started their studies in autumn 2011, this current research aims to explore the possible emerging patterns regarding students' decision to depart from their studies.

Theory: As a data-driven research, the theoretical basis of this study lies on grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 2008) aiming to describe the phenomenon of student departure through the information that students have given to GU regarding their decision to leave.

Method: The research followed the true cohort of 190 students in compulsory school TE programmes longitudinally during the timeframe of autumn 2011–autumn 2015. The data analysis comprised descriptive statistics for providing an overview of the scope of different forms of departure behaviour and Spearman's rank-order correlation for exploring possible associations between those forms. Additionally, an inductive thematic analysis combined with descriptive statistics was conducted on the reasons students reported for leaving their studies.

Results: The results show the rate of official non-completion of studies for the total sample to be 28.4%, whereas between the TE programmes, it varied from 22.2% for 0-3rd, to 30.8% for 4-6th, and 31.0% for 7-9th grade teachers. More women left their studies than men in all programmes and the most common timeframe for leaving was during first and third semester. 21.1% of the students were granted an approved leave from studies, with the distribution varying from 14.1% for 4-6th, to 24.1% for 0-3rd and 27.6% for 7-9th grade teachers. The most popular time to take a study break was during third and fifth semester; the most common duration of the break was two semesters. Moreover, results indicate that 44.4% of students who officially left from their TE programme, continued studies in the same university, whereas 55.6% did not. Most of the students that transferred inside GU remained in TE with an altered focus concerning the school level and/or the combination of subjects they would be teaching. The reasons students reported for departing tended to mirror a perceived mismatch between their expectations and the reality of the chosen education path, criticism towards the arrangement of TE, re-organisation of study path as well as personal and work-related issues.

Lastly, this thesis directs attention to the phenomenon of the so-called 'grey zone' students and the effectiveness of the current application form for a non-completion of studies. Thesis ends with practical suggestions to GU for making the data collection regarding different forms of student departure behaviours more effective.

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The best teachers are those who show you where to look, but don't tell you what to see.
– Alexandra K. Trenfor

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Abbreviations

ECTS	European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System
GU	Gothenburg University
HE	Higher education
HEA	Higher Education Act (<i>Högskolelag</i>)
HEO	Higher Education Ordinance (<i>Högskoleförordningen</i>)
KPU	Complementary pedagogical education (<i>Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning</i>)
Ladok	Student record system used in Gothenburg University
LUN	Teacher Education Board (<i>Lärarytbildningsnämnden</i>)
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SOL	Coordination Board for Teacher Education (<i>Samordningsnämnden för lärarytbildning</i>)
TE	Teacher education
UHR	Swedish Council for Higher Education (<i>Universitets- och högskolerådet</i>)
UHRFS	Regulations from the Swedish Council for Higher Education (<i>Universitets- och högskolerådets föreskrifter</i>)
UKÄ	Swedish Higher Education Authority (<i>Universitetskanslerämbetet</i>)
ULV	Foreign Teacher Training (<i>Utländska lärarens vidareutbildning</i>)
VAL	Teacher education for teachers without a teaching degree (<i>Vidareutbildning av lärare utan lärarexamen</i>)
VET	Vocational Education Teacher Training (<i>Yrkeslärarprogrammet</i>)
VFU	Pedagogical practice (<i>Verksamhetsförlagd utbildning</i>)

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Introduction

Considering the aging teaching staff, with 4 out of 10 teachers retiring in the upcoming 10 years, as well as the growing concern of teachers leaving the profession, teacher shortage is a current serious problem in Sweden (Läraryrket, 2013; OECD, 2016). In fact, according to the Swedish National Agency for Education, the need for full-time teaching staff is estimated to raise from 236 000 in the year 2014 to almost 266 000 positions by the year 2029 (Skolverket, 2015). Hence, the urgent challenge before Sweden is one of recruiting and maintaining new talented professionals in the teaching profession.

Moreover, regarding the distribution of staff shortages, the Swedish Labour Market Tendency Survey (Statistics Sweden, 2014; 2015) indicates there to be a continuing lack of qualified teachers in all school levels from pre- to secondary and even vocational schools. For instance, in 2014, a shortage of pre-school teachers, recreation instructors, special needs teachers, and teachers in mathematics and natural sciences was reported, regarding both newly graduated and as well as skilled applicants (Statistics Sweden, 2014). The Status Report on Higher Education in Sweden (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2014) also added vocational teachers to this list. Furthermore, in 2015, the greatest lack of qualified teaching staff (i.e. job applicants that have newly graduated from a respective education programme) was reported for lower secondary (especially in the subjects of maths and natural sciences) and pre-school as well as among leisure time managers and special needs teachers (Statistics Sweden, 2015).

In the light of the aforementioned, it seems to be important to turn attention to the issues surrounding teacher education programmes aimed at preparing future teaching staff. More specifically, this research focuses on the issue of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes in the University of Gothenburg. The relevance of this research can be seen from at least two aspects. Firstly, regarding compulsory schools, the decision to depart from one's studies in a teacher education programme leads to a loss of (a) prospective teacher(s). Considering the seriousness of (future) teacher shortages indicated above, it seems important to get more insight into matters related to student departure from teacher education programmes. Secondly, this current research is also relevant to the university, as the institutional funding depends, among other things, on the number of students ((Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016c, p. 14), less pupils hence indicating a lower operating budget, it is essential to examine the issues related to student departure behaviour from teacher education programmes. Besides, investigating the students who depart from teacher education programmes might reveal possible patterns among the leavers. Knowing those patterns might in turn be helpful when planning future teacher education programmes as well as encouraging and providing the future student teachers with necessary support to keep studying.

Furthermore, as the second largest teacher education provider in Sweden after Stockholm University (Svensson, 2015), the University of Gothenburg (GU) carries a considerable responsibility in the preparation of prospective teachers. Due to the combination of the significance of this particular institution in educating future teaching staff as well as

pragmatic grounds (i.e. the proximity and availability of the data) GU was chosen as the basis for this current research.

Aim and research questions

By utilizing the information that Gothenburg University has about its students in compulsory school teacher education programmes, this current research aims to explore the possible emerging patterns regarding students' decision to depart from their studies.

On the basis of the research aim, the research questions set comprise the following:

- (1) What is the scope of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU among the student cohort of 2011 regarding different forms of departure?
- (2) What reasons do students report for departing from teacher education programmes in GU?

As follows, a quantitative overview of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU will be provided in the example of student cohort 2011, accompanied by an inductive thematic analysis of the reasons students have reported to the Coordination Board for Teacher Education (*Samordningsnämnden för lärarutbildning*, SOL; previously known as Teacher Education Board, *Lärarutbildningsnämnden*, LUN) for discontinuing their studies in respective programmes. However, in order to give background to what is yet to come, a list of key concepts used in this current thesis is discussed, followed by a brief summary of higher education in Sweden and an insight into the arrangement of teacher education in GU. Thereafter, a literature review is provided, covering themes like the scope of student departure from higher education in the world and in Sweden, approaches used and limitations met when studying student departure, and reasons for departing from studies in higher education. Lastly, the finding of theoretical basis for this current study is discussed followed by an introduction into grounded theory.

Key concepts

Previous research has used a plethora of different concepts when exploring student pathways in higher education, e.g. dropouts, retention rate, completion rate, student non-completion, and transfer (Carlhed, 2015). This current study sets the focus on *student departure* which is seen to represent pupils' official leaving from their study program in the higher education (HE) institution during the nominal time extent that the programme is set to last. Student departure in this case does not include graduation.

Moreover, initially the author intended to utilize the classification of student departure types created by Vincent Tinto (1975, 1987), one of the most-cited authors in the field of student departure (and retention) studies. Tinto (1987) distinguishes between the leaving of students from an individual institution of higher education (marked as the *institutional departure*) and the withdrawal of pupils from a wider system of higher education (noted as the *system departure*). However, the initial plan had to be revised after recognizing the limitations of GU's student records' system Ladok¹ in identifying the aforementioned departure types. According to Tinto, the system departure denotes a permanent stepping out of HE, whereas the institutional departure is considered a more flexible solution that might result either in *institutional transfer* (the migration of students to other HE institutions) or temporary withdrawal from HE (also referred to as the *stopout* or the *interruption of studies*; Tinto, 1987). On the basis of Ladok data, however, a distinction can be made between 'an approved leave from studies' (in Swedish *studieuppehåll*, also known as 'interruption of studies' and 'stopout') and 'a non-completion of studies' (in Swedish *studieavbrott*; in this current thesis also referred to as 'discontinuation of studies'). In the latter case, one can only identify if a student made an *intra-institutional transfer* and proceeded with his/her studies in the same university. Whether a student transferred to another university (*extra-institutional transfer*) or departed from the higher education system entirely, cannot be determined via Ladok's data.

Furthermore, this research is cautious about using the term *dropout* due to its possible negative connotations of labelling the leaver as a failure. As Tinto (1987) points out, *dropout* is "one of the more frequently misused terms in our lexicon of educational descriptors", since "it is used to describe the actions of all leavers regardless of the reasons or conditions which mark their leaving" (p. 3). Therefore, where possible, the term *leaver* is preferred to denote the students that have officially left their studies.

Moreover, as mentioned above, the data from Ladok only allows to identify transfer when it regards passage within the same institution. Hence, in this current research, the term *transfer* is used to mark those students that have left their studies in a teacher education programme, but remain in the system of higher education by transferring to another study programme in GU.

¹ Ladok is the study documentation system used in Gothenburg University to communicate and store all the student-related information. For instance, it includes students' personal contact information (such as name, address, and phone number), pupils' registrations to and results (grades) from different courses, a possibility to request for transcripts for the aforementioned as well as a possibility to apply for a degree. ("Om Ladoktjänster," 2016)

Lastly, the term *stopout* (also referred to as the ‘*interruption of studies*’, or ‘*study break*’) is utilized to represent the students that have temporarily withdrawn from their HE studies (*studieuppehåll*). Officially they are still enrolled in the university and therefore have the right to continue with their studies after the timeframe they have set for the break has passed.

Background

Higher education in Sweden

Today the overall responsibility for higher education and research in Sweden leans on the Swedish Parliament (*Riksdag*) and the Government. Through the Swedish Higher Education Act (HEA, 1992:1434) (in Swedish, *Högskolelag*) and the Higher Education Ordinance (HEO, 1993:100) (*Högskoleförordning*), they regulate the activity of and lay down objectives and guidelines for HE as well as oversee the allocation of resources for HE institutions. In total, there are 31 public-sector HE institutions in Sweden, 14 of which are universities and 17 university colleges (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2015, 2016). Furthermore, higher education in Sweden is built up in 3 levels/cycles, where the first one covers undergraduate (Bachelor), the second involves graduate (Master), and the third comprises doctoral (PhD) studies (HEA, 1992: 1434; Chapter 1, §7). As the full-time studies comprise 60 ECTS credits² per school year (HEO, 1993:100, Chapter 6, §2), the duration of studies in those 3 cycles stretches from 1-2 years for Master's (i.e. 60-120 ECTS), to 3 years (i.e. 180 ECTS) for Bachelor's, and 4 years (i.e. 240 ECTS) for PhD degree, respectively.

Furthermore, regarding trends in educational attainment, Sweden (like many other OECD countries) is following the trajectory of expansion, with 39 per cent of the adult population (ages 25–64) having at least two years of tertiary education (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016c). In comparison, the corresponding figure for OECD countries on average is 33 per cent (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016c). When looking at the distribution of educational attainment in Sweden in relation to age and gender, it appears that the younger population tops the older (in 2014, 45 per cent of 25-34-year-olds had at least 2 years of higher education, compared to 29 per cent of 55-64-year-olds) and women exceed men (in 2014, 45 per cent of women and 33 per cent of men had attained the corresponding level of higher education, respectively) (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016).

Moreover, the access to higher education in Sweden is free for the citizens of the countries included in the European Economic Area and Switzerland (HEA, 1992: 1434, Chapter 4, § 4), and it has been implied that “many students take courses without aiming for a qualification” (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2015, p. 7). Hence, free access, though contributing to the increase of the number of pupils entering higher education and thereby rising people's educational attainment, it may also play a part in the phenomenon of student departure. For instance, a student may apply for and be admitted to a study programme they do not intend to graduate from or that they see as a springboard to the actual specialty of interest, thus making a conscious decision to depart from studies before they even start. Thus, it may be concluded that though the current arrangement of higher education in Sweden has

² ECTS – European Credit and Transfer Accumulation System – is “a learner-centered system for credit accumulation and transfer based on the transparency of learning outcomes and learning processes. [...] ECTS credits are based on the workload students need in order to achieve expected learning outcomes. [...] 60 ECTS credits are attached to the workload of a fulltime year of formal learning (academic year) and the associated learning outcomes. In most cases, student workload ranges from 1,500 to 1,800 hours for an academic year, whereby one credit corresponds to 25 to 30 hours of work.” (“ECTS Users' guide,” 2009, p. 11)

contributed to the raise of educational attainment among the local adult population (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016c), the relative freedom within the system has also made it easier for the students to shape and (re-)structure their study paths (e.g. to prolong, shorten, condense their studies, or even proceed with their education in another HE institution) through different forms of departure behaviour.

Teacher education in Gothenburg University

To begin with, it needs to be acknowledged that beside other education programmes teacher education has a somewhat unique and complex character as it involves the coordination and cooperation of several institutes over the university (Carlhed, 2015), or as GU puts it: “Teacher Education becomes a matter for the entire University” (Koldenius, 2016). Since July 1, 2016, the overall responsibility for the coordination, strategic development, quality assurance and the utilization of university’s combined competence in teacher education lies upon the University Coordination Board for Teacher Education (SOL). In addition to the Faculty of Education, the responsibility for teacher education programmes (specifically those preparing subject teachers) has also been expanded to other faculties within the university. With the help of programme councils, the advisory board for teacher education, and the Unit for Analysis and Teacher Education, SOL shapes the present and future of teacher education in GU (Koldenius, 2016).

Moreover, GU introduces itself as the university offering “*the broadest range of teacher education in Sweden in terms of available programmes and subjects.*” (“The Teacher Education,” 2015, p. 2). For an overview of the different teacher education programmes available in GU, see Table 1 below³. As Table 1 illustrates, there are several paths one can take in order to obtain a teaching degree in Gothenburg University. Though this current thesis focuses on students that have taken the so-called “traditional path” of full-time daily studies, including the core courses in educational sciences, subjects one is going to be teaching as well as the pedagogical practice, the author also acknowledges the importance of the other, alternative paths. Therefore, a brief overview of the latter is available in Appendix 5, giving an insight into the alternative options available for obtaining a teaching degree from GU.

³ Table 1 is created on the basis of the following sources: Teacher Education Programmes, n.d.; Curriculums of the respective TE programmes (“Utbildningsplan för ämneslärarprogrammet 270-330 hp.,” 2011, “Utbildningsplan för grundlärarprogrammet 180-240 hp.,” 2011, “Utländska lärares vidareutbildning,” 2015, “Vidareutbildning av lärare som saknar lärarexamen.,” 2015); and personal contacts with student counselors (mostly regarding information about ULV and VAL).

Table 1. An overview of teacher education programmes offered in GU, the corresponding academic degrees and the duration of the programmes. ⁴

School level	Pre-school		Primary school			Secondary school		Vocational Education Teacher Training (VET)	Foreign Teacher Training (ULV)	Teacher education for teachers without a teaching degree (VAL)
	Pre-school teacher	Extended School Pedagogue	Pre-school class – 3 rd grade	4 th – 6 th grade	7 th – 9 th grade	Upper Secondary School 1 st – 3 rd grade	Complementary pedagogical education (KPU) – 7 th -9 th grade or upper secondary school teacher	Vocational school teacher	All school levels, except pre-school ⁵	Compulsory and Upper Secondary School
Degree upon graduation	BA in Pre-School Education	BA in Primary Education: Extended School	MA in Primary Education: Pre-School and School Years 1-3	MA in Primary Education: School Years 4-6	MA in Primary Education: School Years 7-9	MA in Upper Secondary Education	BA in Secondary Education, Years 7-9 / Upper Secondary Education	Higher Education Diploma in Vocational Education	MA in Primary or Upper-Secondary Education	MA in Primary or Upper-Secondary Education
Programme duration (years/terms)	3.5/7	3/6	4/8	4/8	4.5/9	5/10	1.5/3	1.5/3	Max 2/4	Max 2/4

⁴ Teacher education programmes covered in this table aim to give a teaching degree in Sweden (thus, one does not need to have a teaching degree from Sweden before applying to these programmes), however, GU also offers teacher education for special needs teachers (*speciallärarprogrammet*, *specialpedagogiska programmet*) where having a teaching degree as well as at least 3 years of job experience are required (see, “Utbildningsplan för speciallärarprogrammet,,” 2016, “Utbildningsplan för specialpedagogiska programmet,,” 2016).

⁵ Although GU does not provide pre-school teacher education, it is still obtainable within the framework of ULV - e.g. in the Universities of Malmö and Stockholm (Norberg, 2016).

Selectivity of higher education in the example of compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU

One theme that may have an impact on students' retention in and withdrawal from higher education is the selectivity of the HE system. As follows, the possible ways selectivity can influence student departure is discussed in the example of TE programmes in GU.

To begin with, selectivity regarding the admission determines the diversity and quality of student cohorts entering the education (European Commission, 2015). Currently, the requirements set for admission to compulsory school TE programmes in GU comprise the following: (1) the general criteria (see, HEO, 1993:100, Chapter 7, § 5)⁶ that entail requirements for the applicant's language proficiency and upper secondary school qualification; and (2) the programme-specific criteria that include approved results from certain courses from upper secondary school level (see, *Behörighetskrav till ämneslärarprogrammet*, n.d.)⁷. These criteria keep the pool of potential applicants rather wide, which, on the one hand, may be seen as a reasonable strategy in the light of managing the continuing teacher shortages in Sweden – the more students are admitted, the higher the potential future gain for the profession. And indeed, the interest towards becoming a teacher appears to have increased during the last few years, as the application rate to teacher education programmes in GU in autumn 2015 showed a total growth of 8 per cent compared to the year before (“Ansökningsstatistik HT14-HT15, Lärarprogrammen Göteborgs Universitet”, n.d.)⁸. On the other hand, these requirements fail to take into account something essential for the prospective teachers, i.e. having good social skills. Conducting the admission on the basis of the aforementioned criteria means that the level of the applicants' social abilities is not evaluated in the light of their future professional career, thus taking a risk of admitting students that lack the essential level of social skills needed to endure and prosper in the teaching profession. Realising the limitation/inadequacy of one's social abilities in the professional context may in turn contribute to students' decision to depart from their studies in a TE programme.

Nevertheless, recognising that the expertise of subject matter alone does not suffice in the teaching profession, the Swedish Council for Higher Education has proposed a possible solution with the dictate UHRFS 2015:5, stating that as a trial approach, in selected higher

⁶ i.e. having graduated from upper secondary school and exhibiting the proficiency of Swedish language equivalent of an upper secondary course in Swedish, since all teacher education programmes in GU are taught in Swedish (Teacher Education Programmes, n.d.)

⁷ For instance, for 0-3rd and 4-6th grade teacher education programmes, these courses have been English (course B), Maths (course B), Natural Sciences (i.e. biology, physics, chemistry; course A) and Social studies (course A); for 7-9th grade teacher education programme, a 'passed' grade from English (course B) and Social sciences (course A) in general as well as other courses relevant for the subjects one intends to study in particular have been required (see, *Behörighetskrav till ämneslärarprogrammet*, n.d.).

⁸ In fact, an increase of the number of applications occurred for the programmes preparing teachers for primary school (rose by 14%), subject teachers for secondary school (an 8% increase for lower and 11% for upper secondary) and special pedagogues (increased by 8%). A decrease of interest, however, can be noted regarding the programmes preparing vocational teachers (a decline of the number of applications by 20%) and teachers of special needs (a decrease by 20%) (“Ansökningsstatistik HT14-HT15, Lärarprogrammen Göteborgs Universitet”, n.d.)

education institutions offering teacher education, the suitability of the applicants for teacher education programmes would be evaluated before the admission. Here, the applicant's suitability for the teaching profession is seen to represent a presence of a spectrum of abilities, like the ability to communicate and interact with others, to take the role of a leader, to carry out self-reflection as well as to demonstrate one's motivation for the future professional practice (UHRFS 2015:5). Though utilizing this approach in the admission process narrows the pool of potential applicants, it also raises the quality of the student cohort entering teacher education and thereby reduces the risk of potential student departure. Thus, ascertaining the applicants' suitability for the teaching profession before admitting them into the programme can be seen as an important step in ensuring the students' potential for a successful graduation and entry into the work life.⁹

All in all, it can be concluded that selectivity when it regards the admission into teacher education programmes can impact student retention in higher education and thereby also the probability of potential student departure. Though the proportion of students applying for teacher education in general has increased over the years, there is still a large demand after educated teaching staff; in fact, about 21 000 new students (i.e. an additional 8000 to the current number of new beginners) are needed per year in order to fulfil the demand (Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016b).

The structure of compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU and its possible impact on student departure

Another theme that can have potential implications on student retention in and departure from higher education is the structure of education programmes. For instance, Jansen (2004, p. 427) claims that measures affecting student planning behaviour, like a pre-set degree structure, limited number of elective courses and frequent examinations, have a positive effect on student progression in higher education; whereas according to Berg (1997, as cited in Hovdhaugen, 2011), being given many choices along one's study path is shown to prolong the student's time to degree completion, and thereby possibly increase the risk of student dropout or transfer. Taking into account the aforementioned, could the structure of compulsory school TE programmes in GU affect students' decision to depart from their studies? In order to get an insight into that question, firstly, an overview of the structure of compulsory school TE programmes in GU is provided.

To begin with, regarding elementary school teacher education, GU offers 3 different focuses: (1) elementary school teaching in leisure time home (in Swedish *fritidshem*)¹⁰, (2)

⁹ Although, GU was not partaking in this trial approach, the author considered it to be important to give the reader an insight into the experience of a HE institution that did participate. Therefore, Appendix 6 includes the experience of Jönköping University utilizing the trial approach in the admission into TE programmes in autumn 2016 from the perspective of the Senior Faculty Administrator, Fausto Callegari.

¹⁰ This current research does not include leisure time teacher education programme as it is not an obligatory part of compulsory school, rather a complementing one, providing stimulation and possibilities for development during leisure time, outside school classes.

elementary school teaching in pre-school class and grade 1-3, and (3) elementary school teaching in grades 4-6 (see Table 1). The duration of the programmes is 3 years (i.e. 6 terms, a total of 180 course credits) for the first one, providing a Bachelor's degree, and 4 years (i.e. 8 terms, a total of 240 course credits) for the latter two, providing a Master's degree (*"Utbildningsplan för grundlärarprogrammet 180-240 hp."*, 2011). Regarding the lower secondary school teacher education, i.e. the subject teacher programme (in Swedish, *Ämneslärarprogrammet*) where students can choose their own combination of subjects, the duration of studies is 4.5 years (i.e. 9 terms, a total of 270 course credits), and it gives a Master's degree (*"Utbildningsplan för ämneslärarprogrammet 270-330 hp."*, 2011).

What is more, all three teacher education programmes addressed in this current research were (and still are) built up as a combination of the core courses in educational sciences (in Swedish, *utbildningsvetenskapliga kärnkurser*), studies of subject(s) and - didactics for teaching the targeted age group (i.e. grade 0-3, 4-6 and 7-9 students, respectively), and pedagogical practice (in Swedish, *verksamhetsförlagd utbildning*, VFU)¹¹. As all of these teacher education programmes comprise studies in the first two cycles of higher education, the students have to write two independent dissertations (15 ECTS each) regarding the area of interest in the educational sciences (e.g. subject studies, didactics). After the courses in a chosen programme are done, the students themselves are responsible for applying for a degree from the university as well as the teaching certification from the Swedish National Agency for Education (*Skolverket*)¹².

Keeping in mind the above described structure of compulsory school TE programmes in GU, could it have an effect on students' decision to depart from their studies? On the one hand, if one was to follow Hovdhaugen's claims that

More structured programmes, in which students take a more or less fixed number of courses and where they can also get information about possible labour market options after completing the degree, might lead to lower rates of transfer, since students know where they are going and what they will become as a result of that education. Fewer choices along the way to a degree might also reduce the transfer rate (Hovdhaugen, 2011, p. 246),

it could be hypothesized that the way TE programmes are structured in GU (see Appendices 1–3) could enhance students' stay in the programme, since the number of courses one has to take in order to get a degree is fixed; information about the labour market options is shared through the university's webpage, student fairs, open house visitation days (*"Träffa oss från lärarutbildningen på mässor mm."*, 2016), as well as study counselling sessions; and the choices regarding the selection of subjects one is going to be teaching is made in the beginning of studies. On the other hand, there is another aspect regarding the structure of education programmes that may either coincide with the aforementioned effect or do just the

¹¹ For a detailed overview of the curriculum design according to semesters in compulsory school teacher education programmes, see Appendices 1-3.

¹² For an overview of the qualifications that respective teaching degrees provide, see Appendix 4.

opposite and influence student retention and completion negatively. That aspect is the relative flexibility of the HE system – i.e. the opportunity for the students to move between programmes and institutions and to transfer credits (European Commission, 2015, p. 18) – which may in turn bring about delays in studies, extend the time period needed to complete a degree and thereby also increase the risk of student departure (Hovdhaugen, 2011). Since transferring credits is an accepted practice in Sweden, and TE programmes offered here share the same pedagogical core courses (*utbildningsvetenskapliga kärnkurser*), switching between different TE programmes is rather simple. However, from the TE standpoint, this could be a good thing – e.g. allowing the students to change the focus of their studies may still keep them within the field of teaching. In conclusion, the structure of compulsory school TE programmes in GU may indeed play part in students’ decision to depart from their studies.

An approved leave from and a non-completion of studies in GU

As indicated previously in the section of key concepts’ of this thesis, when it regards student departure from higher education programmes, GU officially differentiates between “*an approved leave from studies*” and “*a non-completion of studies*”, where the former denotes student’s temporary withdrawal from studies (in Swedish, *studieuppehåll*) that is registered in the student records’ system Ladok, while the latter marks student’s official renouncing from a study programme (in Swedish, *studieavbrott*) that is also registered in the same system. Thus, the common nominators for these two forms of student departure are that (1) the incentive for departing from studies comes from the student him-/herself and (2) the decision is recorded in the student records’ system.

Regarding *an approved leave from studies*, the Swedish Council for Higher Education (*Universitets- och högskolerådet*, UHR) states that a study break can be granted and the student given the right to continue with studies after the break, on the basis of special reasons (UHRFS, 2013:3, § 3, 4, 5). Those reasons include social, medical or other specific circumstances, like taking care of a child, doing military or civil/community service, or having assignments in a student union. The higher education institution’s approval for a student’s study break is determined with a certain time-frame and accompanied with the condition that the student has to register for courses before the break time ends (UHRFS, 2013:3, § 3, 4, 5). In addition to the aforementioned, GU also has a list of local rules (see *Antagningsordning för utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå*, 2011: Chapter 9, 2014: Chapter 9, 2015: Chapter 9) that further elaborate the conditions/requirements regarding different forms of student departure behaviours. Over the years, these rules have somewhat changed: e.g. when in 2011, a study break was not granted before the first semester of studies (*Antagningsordning för utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå*, 2011: Chapter 9), this clause has been removed from the later versions of admission regulation documents. What is more, when in 2011, a study break could be granted from a programme or from an independent course, with or without a place guarantee, the following versions of admission regulations only allow issuing study breaks with a place guarantee.

Nevertheless, there are some guidelines regarding study break that are not mentioned in any current documents, but are a part of praxis. For instance, from the author's personal contact with a student counsellor at the Department of pedagogical, curricular and professional studies, Anna Carin Lindberg (2016), the following aspects appeared: firstly, though the admission regulation requires a study position guarantee as a prerequisite for granting a study break, the reality is that this guarantee cannot always be given, but a study break is still granted (e.g. in the cases where the students' motives for asking a study break differ from those specified in UHRFS, 2013:3, § 3, 4, 5) and if there are positions available in the programme after the break time ends, the student can return to studies; secondly, it occurred that during the study break, the students can take courses, but not from their own study programme, i.e. one can take independent courses or even study another programme during the time one is on a study break. Students can also re-take the exams they have failed in their own programme without having to make a re-registration for those courses; thirdly, though the admission regulations since 2011 do not specify the maximum length of a study break, in praxis it has been tied to the time limit determined in the chapter that covers the postponing of the beginning of studies – hence, up to 18 months (see, e.g. *Antagningsordning för utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå*, 2011, 2014, 2015).

Furthermore, when it regards *a non-completion of studies* (in Swedish, *studieavbrott*), the only official document covering it in GU is the admission regulation for education on the first and second cycle of higher education (*Antagningsordning för utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå*, 2011: Chapter 7.2, 2014: Chapter 7, 2015: Chapter 7). The latter states that if one has registered for a course, but wants to discontinue their studies, one has to inform the department responsible for the education. There are two different kinds of discontinuation, i.e. from the programme or from a single course, that abide by slightly different rules. Regarding discontinuing studies in a course, there are in turn two options: (1) the 'early discontinuation' (in Swedish, *tidigt avbrott*) which can be applied for during the first 3 weeks of the course and provides the student with the right to register again to the same course in a later time (a study place guaranteed); and (2) the discontinuation requested after the first 3 weeks of the course have past, where a study place cannot be guaranteed and therefore the student cannot register him-/herself to the course again. Nevertheless, if there are available study places in the course, there is an option for a re-registration (in Swedish, *omregistrering*) to a course. If the course is full, one can still register for the exam (*Antagningsordning för utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå*, 2011: Chapter 7.2, 2014: Chapter 7, 2015: Chapter 7). In addition to the aforementioned, there are also some aspects grown out of praxis (Lindberg, 2016) that regard the student's options for further education after registering a non-completion of studies in an education programme. Namely, according to praxis, after one has registered a non-completion of studies, one still holds the right to re-apply for the same (or any other) education programme with no advantages in front of the other applicants. Another thing is that if one applies for a discontinuation of studies in an education programme, but is still registered to some courses, they will be allowed to take exams in those courses, however, they cannot register to the upcoming courses afterwards (Lindberg, 2016).

Literature review

The scope of student departure from higher education in the world and in Sweden

When it comes to the scope of student departure from higher education, previous research has yielded in rather different findings. This may be due to the differences in defining student departure as well the consequent selection of research approach used to explore this theme (see next chapter). One of the authors in the field of student departure (and retention) studies, Vincent Tinto (1975, 1987), defines student departure from higher education institution as

a longitudinal process of interactions between the individual and the academic and social systems of the college during which a person's experiences in those systems continually modify his goal and institutional commitments in ways which lead to persistence and/or to varying forms of dropout. (Tinto, 1975, p. 94)

Tinto emphasizes the importance of defining student departure in terms of different forms of leaving behaviours and argues that the failure to make such distinctions can result in contradictory research findings and/or misleading implications (Tinto, 1975, 1987).

Nevertheless, in order to get an insight into the theme of interest, a short overview the scope of student departure from higher education in the world as well as in Sweden is provided.

To begin with, according to OECD (2010), on average, almost 3 students out of 10 (i.e. 31%) who enter tertiary education, do not graduate with a degree. The non-completion rates tend to vary between countries, stretching from less than 25% in Belgium, Denmark, France, Japan, Korea, Spain and the Russian Federation to more than 40% in Mexico, New Zealand, Sweden and the United States (OECD, 2010). In Australia, student attrition rate (i.e. the proportion of students who start a bachelor course in one year, but do not complete it nor return the year after) has been shown to fluctuate between 15 and 19% (see Department of Education and Training, Australian Government, 2016). In South Africa, student departure rates have been reported to vary between 30 and 40 per cent (as indicated in the literature review of Manik, 2014). Hence, all in all it can be concluded that the non-completion rates in higher education across the world can vary over two times.

When it regards Sweden, the non-completion rate is around 45% (OECD, 2010), meaning that 4 out of every 10 students decide to part ways with their studies in a chosen higher education programme. Zooming in on the theme of interest, i.e. teacher education, a study conducted in Uppsala University shows student non-completion rate to vary between 30 to 50 per cent (Carlhed, 2015). With respect to different TE programmes, student departure is estimated to be highest in the programmes that prepare subject teachers (for grades 7-9, estimated departure rate 38%; for grades 10-12, 29%) and 4-6th grade teachers (estimated departure rate 27%; Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016a) compared to the ones

training teachers for pre- and vocational schools¹³. Furthermore, regarding gender and the arrangement of TE, men and students following ‘the ordinary’ full-time daily studies are estimated more likely to depart from education than women and pupils in the shorter alternative programmes preparing future teachers, (e.g. KPU¹⁴; Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016a).

What is more, previous research indicates student departure to be highest between the first and second year of higher education studies (Barefoot, 2004; Hovdhaugen, 2009, 2011) which is the timeframe that introductory courses tend to be read, however, the risk of dropping out has also been shown to increase when students have surpassed the estimated time to degree, i.e. the nominal duration of their study programme (Hovdhaugen, 2011). Regarding different forms of leaving behaviour, Hovdhaugen (2011) has shown the students’ risk for dropping out to be of a non-linear character (i.e. high in the beginning of studies and again when reaching the estimated time to degree completion), whereas the risk for transferring is linear (i.e. higher in the beginning of studies and decreasing in time). Hence, it can be concluded that certain patterns do tend to recur in the research regarding the scope, timeframe and character of student departure behaviour.

Approaches used and limitations met when researching student departure from higher education

When looking at the research done on student departure from higher education, this theme tends to be explored alongside with retention, completion rate (i.e. the proportion of students that successfully complete their studies with a degree) and time-to-degree studies (i.e. the proportion of pupils finishing their studies within a reasonable time period) as a part of the wider concept of students’ study success (European Commission, 2015, p. 7). Research on this topic usually aims to provide an insight into the factors affecting study success (and eventual student departure) either on the level of the HE system in general, the institution, or the individual (European Commission, 2015).

Moreover, as this insight is often used in the evaluation of student situation from the economic standpoint, research in this topic tends to be conducted mostly from the perspective of the HE institution (Carlhed, 2015; Hovdhaugen, 2009, 2011). However, utilizing data from the administrative records available in HE institutions limits the amount and depth of different aspects of student departure that can be investigated; for instance, Hovdhaugen (2011, p. 242) points out the lack of information regarding student intentions and motivation as well as “what made the student enrol in a specific programme in the first place”. Therefore, the

¹³ This statistical analysis from the Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ) focused on the student cohort that started teacher education in autumn 2012 and followed them until spring 2015; the variable of registered discontinuation of studies was not utilized, instead the possible departure was estimated on the basis of students’ last recorded registration to courses within the TE programme. The closer the students’ last registration to the beginning term of the programme, the more likely they were considered to have departed from their studies.

¹⁴ See Appendix 5 for an overview of alternative paths for obtaining teaching degree from GU.

overview studies conducted on the basis of administrative records (e.g. Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2014, 2015, 2016c) are often accompanied by smaller scale interview and/or questionnaire-based research providing a deeper complementary insight into the theme of interest (see e.g. Carlhed, 2015).

Furthermore, regarding the difficulties in investigating the theme of student departure, the first hurdle appears to be the distinction between the different forms of departure, as it can be made in various ways: for instance, according to the time of departure (early or later in the programme); on the basis of whether the departure was permanent or temporary (e.g. in case of study break) (Carlhed, 2015); or whether the departure accounts as a system or institutional leave (Tinto, 1987). The differences in distinction between the different forms of departure relate to the differences in data gathering. For example, true cohort studies where a group of students are followed longitudinally from the beginning of their studies until the expected graduation can give more detailed information about the individuals' paths than the cross-sectional design which only compares the number of graduates with the number of entrants into the programme, however, the former is also more time consuming as it takes time for the students to graduate (European Commission, 2015).

Another difficulty regarding the investigation of student departure involves the availability of data and the accuracy of the results in reflecting reality. As mentioned above, the theme of student departure tends to be investigated in conjunction with the concept of study success (European Commission, 2015, p. 7). As the records of officially registered discontinuation of studies are often either unavailable or hard to reach, the most common method utilized for measuring student departure seems to be following pupils' registrations to the courses (i.e. the retention rate; if there is no active registration, the student has probably departed; Swedish Higher Education Authority, 2016a), however, the results of such research may not accurately display the reality. For instance, it does not allow to identify the form of students' leave (e.g. temporary or permanent, system or institutional leave; Tinto, 1987) and therefore limits the conclusions that can be drawn regarding the departure behaviour. All in all, it can be concluded that there are several approaches used in investigating student departure from HE, which may yield in different results and the comparison of the findings is therefore risky (European Commission, 2015; Tinto, 1987).

Reasons for departing from studies in higher education

Regarding the investigation of reasons for departure from studies in higher education, research historically firstly focused on students' individual attributes, skills and motivation as the factors explaining the leaving behaviour, whereas in the 1970's, a shift occurred towards also accounting for the role of environment (i.e. in particular, the HE institution) in the decision-making process (Tinto, 1975, 1987, 2006). Today's research in this topic usually tends to cover both parties (see, e.g. (Carlhed, 2015; Georg, 2009; Hovdhaugen, 2009, 2011), therefore, as follows an overview of students' individual characteristics and those pertained to the HE institution is provided with regards to their impact on student departure.

Students' individual characteristics

To begin with, when it concerns the role of students' individual characteristics in their decision to depart from studies, research indicates it to vary according to the different forms of leaving behaviour, i.e. some characteristics that are relevant for a certain form of departure may not have effect on another form. For instance, Hovdhaugen (2009) indicates student's age, immigrant background and field of study to be the factors that explain pupil's decision to transfer, whereas gender, educational goal setting, upper secondary school grades, parental education level, and the closeness of HE institution to the student's home are seen to have effect on the discontinuation of studies. According to Manik (2014), in South-Africa, students' race, low socio-economic status and parental education level as well as being the first family member to pursue higher education are characteristics predisposing students to discontinue their studies. Moreover, an important theme that keeps recurring in most of the studies on student departure, after the publication of Tinto's (1975, 1987) longitudinal model of institutional departure, is the pupils' goal and institutional commitment that is shown to be modified by the experiences one obtains within the social and academic systems of a HE institution, and consequently guide the decision to either persist or depart. According to Tinto (1990, as stated in Barefoot, 2004), even the best students may sometimes decide to leave whether it be due to boredom, lack of academic challenge, poor 'institutional fit', failure to connect to the campus' social systems, financial problems, general dissatisfaction or just a desire to transfer elsewhere.

As Georg (2009) echoes, the primary reasons for considering a departure originate from student's low commitment to either the university study in general, or to the specific field of study in particular, while perceived stress or lack of ability are seen as less important motives for leaving. He also denotes that students who are inclined to discontinue their studies have already considered changing their subject area at least once, have less achievement motivation, spend less time attending classes and are more likely to work during their studies (Georg, 2009).

Expanding on the theme of student commitment, research emphasizes the importance of pupils' view on their studies and what they expect out of their education. For instance, when comparing the views of stayers and leavers, Carlhed (2015) indicated that 22% of the latter reported a lack of engagement and found it difficult to keep up with memorising facts, whereas the former had placed greater importance upon gaining practical rather than theoretical knowledge during the study programme. Pupils view on their studies has been shown to be influenced by their family background, more specifically the emotional support and expectations set on students by their parents tend to affect students' own expectations towards their education. For example, Simmons (2012) points out that especially mothers have influence over students' academic decision-making by encouraging them to seek for happiness regardless of career choice. All in all, it can be concluded that though students' individual background characteristics do have some explanatory power when it involves different forms of departure behaviour (Hovdhaugen, 2009), their personal commitment to

studies in general and to the HE institution in particular seem to be of the highest importance in this context.

Institutional characteristics

Recently, more attention has been turned on the significance of institutional characteristics in student departure (Barefoot, 2004; Georg, 2009; Hovdhaugen, 2011). Here, classroom experiences, the extent of the regulation of a study programme, transparency of examination regulations and quality of teaching and advising have been given as examples of the institutional characteristics of interest (Barefoot, 2004; Georg, 2009; Hovdhaugen, 2011). However, keeping in mind Tinto's (1975, 1987) view of student departure reflecting pupils' difficulty to integrate themselves into the academic and/or social systems of the university, the HE institution may also influence student departure through the way the studies in different education programmes are arranged: for instance, when teacher education courses are scattered all over the university, studying together with pupils from other specialties may contribute to the student having less social connection with their own course mates and thereby to the loss of the feeling of "us" (Carlhed, 2015, p. 15).

Nevertheless, Georg (2009) argues that although the institutional influence on students' tendency to depart from studies has been shown to be modest compared to the impact of students' individual characteristics (i.e. 5% versus 95% of explanation power, respectively), retaining and improving teaching quality appears to be the most important factor among the list of institutional influences.

Finding theoretical basis

Considering that this current research was carried out on the basis of administrative data available in GU, it did set some limitations to the choice of theory, since a lot of the information included in the more prevalent approaches on student retention and departure was unobtainable from administrative records. For example, using Tinto's theory on students' institutional departure (see Tinto, 1975, 1987) would have acquired information on pupils' pre-admission expectations, their prior educational and family background as well as educational goal setting (before and during studies) and data on students' integration into the social environment of the university; none of which are obtainable via student records in Ladok. Therefore, it was decided to let the data itself, i.e. students' feedback to GU regarding their decision to leave, guide the research and provide an understanding of the leavers' thought pattern in the decision-making process. In order to do so, grounded theory was utilized. The next chapter will give an overview of what grounded theory is, where it tends to be used, what are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach, and why it suited for studying the theme of interest of this thesis.

Grounded theory

To begin with, it needs to be defined what grounded theory is. In short, grounded theory can be described as “a method of discovery” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 8) used to explore social processes that people experience. A somewhat longer definition would include that grounded theory refers to the utilization of systematic methodological strategies when studying social processes in order to develop “theories from research grounded in data rather than deducing testable hypotheses from existing theories” (Charmaz, 2006, p. 4). Hence, grounded theory is a theory that researchers create (or ‘discover’, to use the word of Glaser & Strauss, 2008) on the basis of (usually qualitative) data gathered and analysed in a specific systematic manner (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2008).

Furthermore, the utilization of grounded theory in research started in the 1960’s and gained popularity among research communities in the 1970’s in USA, after Glaser and Strauss (2008) used it to study the theme of dying in hospitals. Following that study, they published a book titled “*The discovery of grounded theory. Strategies for qualitative research*” where the methodology was refined and guidelines for conducting research grounded in systematically obtained and analysed data were given (Glaser & Strauss, 2008). Over the years, the understanding of the basis of grounded theory (i.e. what kind of data to use) has developed in somewhat divergent ways, varying from the use of only qualitative data (as deemed appropriate by Glaser) to the utilization of a mixed-methods’ design in order to broaden and deepen one’s insight into the theme of interest (as seen valuable by Strauss and Corbin)¹⁵. This current research represents the latter approach by analysing the administrative data available in GU qualitatively as well as quantitatively.

What is more, the themes that are studied with grounded theory tend to belong among substantial and often under-researched areas¹⁶, aiming to get an inside view of the topic of interest by trying to enter as deep into the settings and situations of respondents as possible (Glaser & Strauss, 2008). Like Charmaz (2006), puts it, “grounded theory serves as a way to learn about the worlds we study and a method for developing theories to understand them.” (p. 10). In the case of this current research, the author did not contact the actual students that left their study programmes, but instead focused thoroughly on the information that could be obtained about the leavers from the administrative data – hence, aiming for an ‘inside view’ of the higher education institution (i.e. GU) on the topic of student departure from teacher training.

Like any other research approach, grounded theory also has its advantages and limitations. Regarding the pros of utilizing grounded theory, the one aspect that is referred to by Charmaz (2006) and Glaser and Strauss (2008) is its flexibility and adaptability for research with varied theoretical and substantive interests. Since grounded theory research is data-driven and can be conducted through the application of relatively flexible guidelines (e.g.

¹⁵ For an overview of the history of grounded theory, see e.g. Charmaz, 2006, pp. 4–10.

¹⁶ E.g. Glaser and Strauss’s study on dying, or Patrick L. Biernacki’s research on the recovery of heroin addiction without treatment (as described by (Charmaz, 2006, pp. 13–14). Regarding the theme of interest in this current thesis, grounded theory has also been used when investigating family influence on first generation college students’ academic decision-making (see Simmons, 2012).

coding, using constant comparative methods in the data analysis, and memo-writing) instead of strict prescriptions, it is applicable in a wide spectrum of research areas exploring social processes.

Moreover, regarding the limitations of utilizing grounded theory, the following aspects have been noted: Firstly, the researcher's bias, i.e. the prior knowledge of and experiences in the theme of interest can direct the investigators' attention regarding what they deem to be important in the data (Charmaz, 2006). Hence, yes, grounded theory is data-driven, but it is still the researcher him-/herself who analyses the data and "discovers" the theory in it. Although, in the classic grounded theory works, Glaser and Strauss (2008) refer to the discovery of theory grounded in data to be separate from the scientific observer and even encourage researchers to postpone doing literature review before having conducted analysis on their own data in order to "avoid seeing the world through the lens of extant ideas" (as cited in Charmaz, 2006, p. 6). Nevertheless, as it is not reasonable to design and conduct a study without having a prior understanding of what has been done in the field of interest thus far (e.g. if and why this new research would even be needed), it is unlikely that the researcher applying grounded theory remains entirely unaffected by previous research. Like Charmaz points out, "we construct our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practices" (Charmaz, 2006, p.10), thus, "any theoretical rendering offers an *interpretive* portrayal of the studied world, not an exact picture of it" (ibid.).

Secondly, constructing grounded theory is a time-consuming endeavour where, depending on the social process of interest, reaching and recruiting participants can be difficult (Glaser & Strauss, 2008). As grounded theory usually tends to be constructed on the basis of interview data, the sample size of studies utilizing this approach is inclined to be small (Charmaz, 2006), raising a question of generalizability, i.e. whether a theory grounded in the data from a small sample of participants reflects and represents the experiences of a population. Depending on the investigators' goal for their research (e.g. if generalizability to the population is pursued or if the investigation is only pertained to a specific smaller group of interest), this could potentially become a problem.

Lastly, it is important to discuss the reasons for deciding to utilize grounded theory in this current research. As mentioned earlier, the character of administrative data in GU limited the possibility of following the prevalent theories present in student departure research (e.g. Tinto's (1975, 1987) longitudinal model of students' institutional departure) due to the unobtainability of some of the information that would have been necessary in such pursuit (see examples on p. 22). However, grounded theory fitted the author's objective of obtaining an 'inside view' (Charmaz, 2006) of the phenomenon of student departure from teacher education programmes from the perspective of the higher education institution, thus, demonstrating what can be said about the leavers on the basis of administrative data as well as indicating the gaps of knowledge arising from the laconic character of that same data. In line with grounded theory, the author's intention with this thesis was to provide useful information (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2008) to GU that could serve as an input for making practical changes to raise the effectiveness of the current system for data gathering regarding students' movement in the higher education. Finally, what attracted the author to grounded

theory were the relatively flexible guidelines of data analysis pertained in it instead of a set of rigid prescriptions (Charmaz, 2006). It provided and enhanced the feeling of freedom and openness towards the research process and enabled the author to vary the data-gathering strategies when confronted with obstacles.

Method

As stated previously, on the basis of the data that the university has about its students, this current research set out to investigate the possible emerging patterns regarding student departure from higher education in the example of three compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU, student cohort of 2011. Hence, the intention was to get an insight into the situation of student departure from the university's perspective. Therefore, the author focused on the existing data from different sources in GU (i.e. Ladok and LUN/SOL) rather than conducting a new collection of data. The nature and amount of data in turn determined the character of analysis – a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods.

What is more, GU was chosen as the study target due to several reasons. Apart from the pragmatic grounds - i.e. the proximity and availability of the data for the investigator – GU is the second largest teacher education provider in Sweden after Stockholm University, producing over 1000 new qualified teachers per year (Svensson, 2015). Thus, the role of GU in the preparation of prospective teachers is one of a considerable nature here in Sweden. However, the decision to focus specifically on the abovementioned three programmes does not intend to imply that other teacher education programmes offered in GU are less important. The basis for this decision was the notion that the first 9 grades are compulsory for all the students in Sweden (Skollag, 2010: 800, Chapter 7, § 10, 12) whereas the education before and after these nine grades is up to the students themselves and/or their parents.

What is more, the timeframe of 2011-2015 is chosen intentionally, as it represents the first cohort of teacher education students in respective programmes after the teacher education reform in 2011, when the previous integrated teaching degree was replaced by four new and more specific professional degrees in (1) pre-school education, (2) primary education, (3) subject teaching and (4) vocational teaching (see UNESCO, 2012). As the duration of the aforementioned teacher education programmes is 4 years for primary and 4.5 years for lower secondary school teachers respectively, by the end of the year 2015, this cohort of students should have graduated from the university. Hence, this choice of timeframe allows to follow the true cohort of students longitudinally from the beginning of their studies to the end.

Sample

The sample of this study consisted altogether of 190 teacher education students from three different compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU. They represented the true student cohort of 2011, i.e. full-time enrolled students who started studying in compulsory school teacher education programmes at GU in autumn 2011 and departed from their studies in those programmes at some point during the timeframe of 2011-2015. More specifically, the teacher education programmes that were included in this research were the following: from primary school teacher education – (a) pre-school class till grade 3 (N=54) and (b) grade 4-6 teachers (N=78); and from secondary school teacher education – (c) grade 7-9 teachers

(N=58)¹⁷. Students' age and gender distribution for the whole sample as well as for the study programmes separately are presented in Table 1.

Table 2. *Gender and age distribution among respective teacher education programmes and the total sample.*

		0-3	4-6	7-9	Total
Gender	Men	7 (13.0%)	28 (35.9%)	22 (37.9%)	57 (30.0%)
	Women	47 (87.0%)	50 (64.1%)	36 (62.1%)	133 (70.0%)
Age	M	23.04	22.65	24.16	23.22
	Min	18	18	18	18
	Max	49	40	54	54
	SD	5.81	4.39	7.45	5.87

Data

To begin with, a permission was obtained from the Ladok services and the Teacher Education Board (*Lärarytbningsnämnden*, LUN; now restructured and renamed as The Coordination Board for Teacher Education, i.e. *Samordningsnämnden för lärarytbningsnämnden*, SOL) to access and use the data available in the university databases about the student cohort of 2011 enrolled in compulsory school teacher education programmes at GU during the timeframe of 2011-2015.

The data used for this research included the following:

- Admission, course registration, graduation and departure statistics;
- Students' background information (e.g. gender, age, curriculum they studied on, timeframe of departure, performance indicator¹⁸);
- The content of students' application for an approved leave from studies (i.e. study break; *studieuppehåll*) and a non-completion of studies (*studieavbrott*).

More specifically, the application for non-completion of studies (see, "Avsägelse av studieplats (studieavbrott)," n.d.) currently contains two questions about leaving the

¹⁷ N denotes the number of students that began studying in a compulsory school teacher education programme in Autumn 2011, not the number of students that departed from studies.

¹⁸ Student departure studies that include the variable of performance indicator usually tend to use grade point average (GPA; see e.g. Hovdhaugen, 2011). In this case however, the student performance indicator could not be analysed the same way, as the grading system used in GU does not allow to calculate student's grade point average. Another way of indicating student's performance would have been to include into the analysis the number of course credits completed in a TE programme, since one only gets credits when one passes a course; thus, a higher number of course credits completed would indicate a successful performance. Nevertheless, the latter approach would have had a serious disadvantage regarding the accuracy of portraying the reality – namely, a student may depart from their studies in the beginning of the TE programme and therefore have a lower number of course credits completed, but it does not necessarily mean that the student was performing poorly. Considering the aforementioned arguments, a decision was made not to include student's performance indicator into the analysis of this current research.

programme, first of which asks the student to give a reason for their departure (here, one can choose between two options, either leaving ‘*due to teacher education programme itself*’ or because of ‘*other reasons*’), and the second question directs the student to elaborate on the choice in case if one chose ‘*teacher education programme itself*’ as the reason for leaving. Since filling in some of the question fields in the application for a non-completion of studies was made obligatory rather recently (around the timeframe of 2014/2015), it has created a situation where a considerable amount of information about the students that left their study programme is lacking from the application over the years. In fact, elaborating on the reason(s) for leaving is still a voluntary question to answer. Initially, the author intended to match the quantitative data received from Ladok with the qualitative information provided by LUN/SOL via the students’ personal ID-numbers in order to get a clearer insight into the personal profiles of the leavers¹⁹. This plan, however, turned out to be unfeasible as the data received from LUN/SOL did not contain information that would have allowed to link the reported reason(s) for leaving to a specific student. Nevertheless, since the data from LUN/SOL did include the year and semester of admission and departure, it was possible to identify students that belonged to the cohort of interest. However, as for this specific cohort, there were very few answers available elaborating on reasons for leaving, a decision was made to widen the focus on all the students in the respective compulsory school teacher education programmes regardless of the student cohort they belonged to.

Furthermore, the application for an approved leave from studies, did (and still does) not include a question about the reasons behind one’s decision. Even though the Higher Education Ordinance (HEO, 1993: 100, Chapter 7, § 33) and the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHRFS, 2013:3, § 3,4,5) state that there have to be special reasons for granting a student an approved leave from studies, the content of those reasons on an individual level cannot be identified from the student records’ system Ladok. When it comes to an approved leave from studies, Ladok only allows to identify if, when and for how long time the study break was taken as well as whether the student was given a place guarantee in the study programme (or course) or not. The latter may give some insight into the reasons students reported when asking for an approved leave from studies. Namely, according to the Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHRFS, 2013:3, § 3,4,5) and the local rules in GU (see, (“Antagningsordning för utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå,” 2011: Chapter 9, 2014: Chapter 9, 2015: Chapter 9), when it comes to providing a place guarantee, the university will firstly consider the students with medical reasons, taking care of a child, having assignments in the student union, doing military or civil service and having temporary or probationary service in the Swedish Armed Forces (*Försvarsmakten*). Hence, it may be hypothesized that the students who received a place guarantee may have reported some of the aforementioned reasons when asking for an approved leave from studies, whereas the pupils that did not receive a place guarantee may have referred to other motives driving their decision (in which case, the university would not have been obligated to provide them a place guarantee).

¹⁹ Thus, following Glaser and Strauss’s (2008) advice of entering as deep into the phenomenon of student departure as would be possible on the basis of administrative records.

Moreover, after recognising the shortage of information GU has regarding the reasoning behind student departure from compulsory school TE programmes, the author contemplated about getting a deeper insight into the matter by conducting interviews with the leavers (as tends to be the norm for research aiming at developing a grounded theory (see Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2008)). It would have been possible to reach those students as their contact information is obtainable from their profile in Ladok. However, when consulting with a lawyer at GU, Kristina Ullgren, regarding the possibility of contacting these pupils, juridical reasons surfaced that made this approach unfeasible. Therefore, no interviews were conducted with the leavers and the following analysis is solely based on the information recorded in the databases of Ladok and LUN/SOL.

Last but not least, there was also an idea to include data on students' use of career services (e.g. visiting the study counsellor) into the analysis, however, when contacting a student counsellor in the Teacher Education Board (LUN, now SOL), it appeared that no such records are kept and thus no data is available. When it regards visits to student counsellors, GU mostly utilizes drop-in times (but pre-booked meetings are also possible) and the content of these visits is kept confidential ("Studievägledning," 2016).

Data analysis

Firstly, the information received from Ladok on paper form on March 16, 2016, was comprised into a data file where all the students were given a personal identification code. This code enables to match the student's data in the data file with that on paper and thereby provides the future research with the opportunity to look for and create possible new variables to use in the further analysis. Only the author of this thesis has the access to the list of personal identification codes that allow to do the matching. The quantitative data analysis was carried out on an anonymized data file.

Moreover, the data analysis in this current study included several steps.

To begin with, *descriptive statistics* were produced to give an overview of the scope of student departure. Here, frequency distributions were provided for different forms of departure behaviour represented among the specific three programmes as well as within the total sample. In addition, *Spearman's rank-order correlation* was used to investigate possible associations between different forms of student departure behaviour.

Next, an *inductive thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2006) *combined with descriptive statistics* was carried out on the reasons that students have reported for leaving their studies in a compulsory school teacher education programme. In accordance with the guidelines of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2008), during the coding process, the assigned codes were constantly compared to one another in order to identify and elaborate on the categories (i.e. themes) that students' directed attention to when reporting their reasons for leaving. This analysis included the answers from all the students that have officially left a compulsory school TE programme since Autumn 2011, not only the ones from the cohort of interest (for reasoning, see the section Data). Consistent with the aim of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser & Strauss, 2008), the current research intended to

provide an inside view of students' decision to depart on the basis of the information they have given to the university.²⁰

Research ethics

When it regards following research ethics, the access to student records was requested through Ladok services and Teacher Education Board in Gothenburg University (*Läroarbildningsnämnden*, LUN; now SOL). The information obtained about the identity of the students who had left teacher education programmes was kept confidential and the data file that was analysed contained anonymized data (see the previous subsection). Participants' background information was used in a generalized manner and only for the purposes of this current research in order to explore the possible emerging patterns among the students that have left their studies in compulsory school teacher education programmes.

²⁰ It is important to recognize that in addition to what has been reported, the notable lack of data shown in Table 4 may also be meaningful and thus perhaps serve as an input for the future researchers to investigate why students tend to digress from explaining the grounds of their decision to leave.

Results

On the basis of the information that Gothenburg University has about its students in compulsory school teacher education programmes, this research aimed to explore the possible patterns regarding students' decision to depart from their studies.

Stemming from the aim, the subsequent research questions were set:

- (1) What is the scope of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU among the student cohort of 2011 regarding different forms of departure?
- (2) What reasons do students report for departing from teacher education programmes in GU?

This following chapter will give answers to these questions as well as illuminate the phenomenon of the so-called 'grey zone' students and give insight into the effectiveness of the current application form for a non-completion of studies at GU.

The scope of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU in the example of student cohort 2011.

To begin with, descriptive statistics were produced in order to give an overview of the scope of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU. As follows, the results are represented according to the different forms of student departure, i.e. the non-completion of studies, the approved leave from studies, and transfer within GU.

The non-completion of studies

Regarding the non-completion of studies (in Swedish, *studieavbrott*) in compulsory school teacher education programmes, it appears that a total of 54 (i.e. 28.4%) students out of 190 made this decision. Although, the gender distribution among the leavers slanted markedly towards women (N(women)= 39, i.e. 72.2% versus N(men)=15, i.e. 27.8%), it is corresponding to and representative of the proportional gender distribution within the compulsory school TE programmes in general (i.e. 70% women and 30% men, see Table 2). When it regards student departure rates according to TE programmes, these tended to vary, stretching from 22.2% for 0-3rd grade teachers, to 30.8% for 4-6th, and 31.0% for 7-9th grade teachers. For a more detailed overview of student departure behaviour from compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU, see Table 3.

Table 3. An overview of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU in the example of student cohort 2011 during the timeframe of 2011-2015.

	0-3 grade	4-6 grade	7-9 grade	Total
Students per programme (N)	54	78	58	190
Non-completion of studies	12	24	18	54
Transfer after non-completion	3	12	9	24
Transfer total*	4	12	12	28
Approved leave from studies	13	11	16	40
The 'grey zone' students	4	21	25	50
Graduated with nominal time	30	27	7	64

* Transfer total denotes the number of students whose transfer into another study programme within GU is identifiable via Ladok's data. The difference between transfer total and transfer after non-completion is that the students in the latter have officially declined their study place in the respective TE programme and thereafter transferred, whereas the former have enrolled in another programme without officially declining their study place in the TE programme.

What is more, when investigating the departure (i.e. the non-completion) time without differentiating between specific programmes, it appeared that the most common timeframe for leaving one's studies among this student cohort was the first and the third semester. In fact, almost half of the students that officially gave up their study position did it during the aforementioned semesters (i.e. 25.9% and 22.2%, respectively). An overview of students' choice of time for leaving their studies is given in Figure 1.

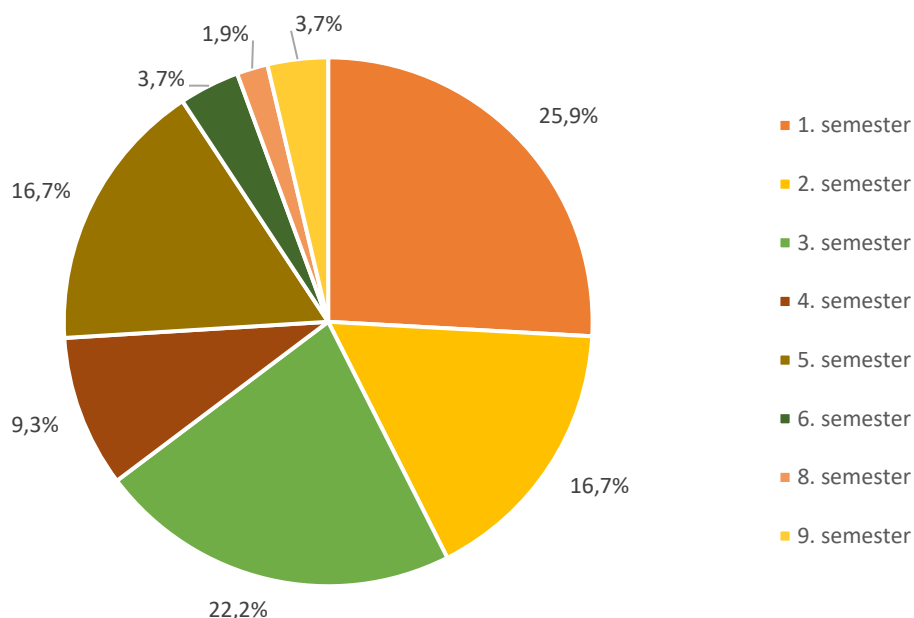


Figure 1. The scope of student departure from compulsory school teacher education programmes according to semesters (N=54).²¹

²¹ Reminder: the nominal duration of the compulsory school TE programmes in GU is 8 semesters for 0-3rd and 4-6th grade, and 9 semesters for 7-9th grade teachers, respectively.

Furthermore, when exploring student departure time according to the TE programmes, there occurred some interesting differences. For example, among 4-6th grade TE students, the most popular time for leaving was during the first semester, whereas 7-9th grade teachers tended to leave more during the third, and 0-3rd grade teachers during the fifth semester. The distribution of the number of leavers per semester according to the TE programme is presented in Figure 2.

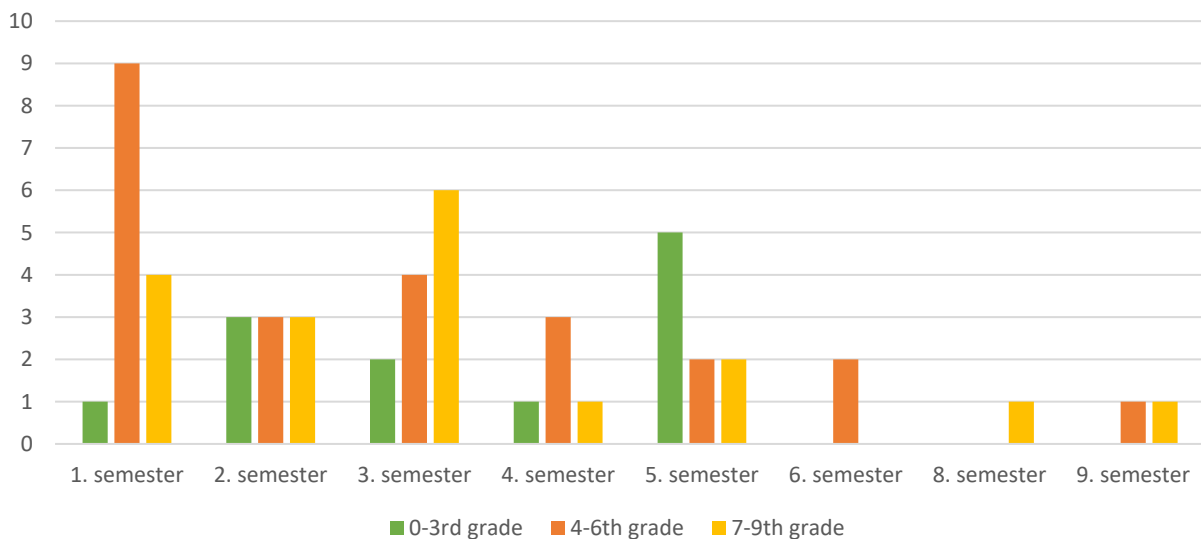


Figure 2. The distribution of non-completion of studies per semester according to teacher education programmes ($N(0-3)=12$; $N(4-6)=24$; $N(7-9)=18$).

The approved leave from studies

When it regards the approved leave from studies, a total of 40 students (i.e. 21.1% out of $N=190$) were granted it; however, the distribution of approved leave from studies varied according to the TE programme, stretching from 14.1% for 4-6th, to 24.1% for 0-3rd and 27.6% for 7-9th grade teachers. The most popular time to take a study break was during the third and the fifth semester; in fact, half of the students who took an approved leave from studies did it during the aforementioned semesters (i.e. 27.5% in the third and 22.5% in the fifth semester, respectively). The most common duration for a study break in this student cohort was two semesters; a total of 57.5%, i.e. $N=23$ pupils, were granted an approved leave from studies for this exact timeframe.

Moreover, as the data available in Ladok only allows to differentiate between an approved leave from studies (i.e. stopout; in Swedish, *studieuppehåll*) and a non-completion of studies (i.e. declining from one's position as a student in a TE programme; in Swedish *studieavbrott*), a possible connection between these variables was also investigated. It appeared that 27.8% (i.e. $N=15$) of those who discontinued their studies also took a study break before officially declining their position as a student in a compulsory school TE programme, whereas 72.2%

(i.e. N=39) left directly. No statistically significant correlation was found between the aforementioned variables.

Transfer within GU

Regarding transfer inside GU, the results indicate that 44.4% (i.e. N=24 students) of students who officially left from studies in a compulsory school teacher education programme, continued their education in the same university, whereas 55.6% (i.e. N=30) did not²². A strong correlation appeared between declining one's study position in a teacher education programme and transferring to another study programme within GU ($\rho = .528$, $p = .000$; N=190), whereas no statistically significant correlation was found between taking an approved leave of absence and transferring.

What is more, somewhat surprisingly, most of the intra-institutional transfers identified remained within the field of teacher education: in fact, 17 students out of 24 (i.e. 70.8%) that officially declined from a study position in their respective TE programme, ensued their path of becoming a teacher with an altered focus regarding the school level and/or the combination of subjects they would be teaching. Nevertheless, there were also 4 students that transferred to another study programme in GU without officially leaving from their respective TE programme, thus making the total count of intra-institutional transfer for this sample N=28 (i.e. 14.7% out of the whole sample). Out of these 4 students, 3 proceeded in another TE programme with a different focus. Lastly, when looking at the transfer rate with regard to the number of students in each respective TE programme, it appears to be highest among 7-9th grade teachers (i.e. 20.7%), compared to 4-6th and 0-3rd grade teachers (i.e. 15.4% and 7.4%, respectively). All in all, it appears that the potential loss of prospective teachers is rather low (i.e. 8 pupils out of 28) when it regards a certain form of student departure, i.e. the transfer.

The 'grey zone' students

During the process of entering and coding the data in SPSS, there appeared a phenomenon that for the absence of a better name will be called *the 'grey zone' students*. The 'grey zone' students are the students that (a) have not officially renounced from their study position in a respective TE programme, (b) are currently not on an approved leave of absence from their studies (an official study break), and (c) do not have an active registration to any of the courses offered in their respective TE programme. Among the student cohort of 2011, there were a total of N=50 students (i.e. 26.3% of the entire sample of 190 students) that meet the criteria described above. When looking at this phenomenon in the light of different teacher education programmes, it appears that the highest ratio of the so-called 'grey zone' students comes from the 7-9th grade teacher education programme (N=25), whereas the lowest ratio (N=4) can be noted among the students from the 0-3rd grade TE programme. Among the 4-6th

²² Whether those 30 pupils who did not transfer within GU continued their studies in some other HE institution or left higher education altogether cannot be identified from student records provided by Ladok.

grade TE students, there are N=21 pupils that meet the criteria of being in the ‘grey zone’. When looking at the proportional distribution of the so-called ‘grey zone’ students among the respective teacher education programmes, it appears that a total of 7.4% from 0-3rd grade, 26.9% from 4-6th grade and 43.1% from 7-9th grade subject teacher education programme fit the description.²³

Considering that altogether 54 students have officially left from their studies in a compulsory school TE programme, an addition of N=50 of the so-called ‘grey zone’ students makes the proportion of (potential) student departure notably higher and this should be alarming.

Student-reported reasons for leaving compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU

When it comes to the reasons students reported for discontinuing their studies, these seem to be relatively similar regardless of the teacher education programme one was enrolled in. As follows, a general summary of the themes observed is provided below, accompanied by few examples of data extracts for each theme.

Expectations and reality

To begin with, one topic that was represented among the students in all three teacher education programmes was the realization of a mismatch between one’s expectations and the chosen education path. For instance, it was stated that “*I realized that teaching profession was not for me*” as well as “*it [the TE programme] was not as I expected. Too much social studies*”. Some students also expressed a loss of interest towards becoming a teacher (e.g. “*I am no longer interested in educating myself to become a teacher*”) and discontent with the teacher education programme (e.g. “*I was not happy with the programme and moved back to my hometown Malmö*”; “*Teacher education is too hazy; it does not suit me! I believe it needs a clearer framework*”). To sum up, all those students indicated, though in slightly different ways, that they entered the programme with a vision of what teacher education and/or teaching should be like, but were confronted with another reality that did not seem to conform to their expectations and thereby led to the decision to depart from the programme.

Criticism towards the arrangement of TE programmes

Another recurrent theme among the leavers was criticism towards the arrangement of teacher education programmes. In fact, the spectrum of critique from the students spanned from being discontent with the coordination of work load in the courses, e.g. “*Too intense start, it could*

²³ It is important to keep on mind that the timeframe this situation was recorded in was in March, 2016. By today, some students may have either returned to or departed from their studies and therefore no longer be in the so-called ‘grey zone’.

have been done differently. Intensive start followed by days off at the end of the week, would have rather had days off where one had time to read the literature”, to the limitations set by the structure of a teacher education programme, e.g. “I only wanted to study two subjects from the elementary school teacher education programme, but had to study four”, to the treatment students received in the courses, e.g. “Hazy and unserious education. In some courses, we were treated like primary school children instead of adults that are supposed to teach primary school children.”, and even the length/duration of teacher education e.g. “Far too many years!” All in all, this theme seems to relate to the former one, as they both entail indications of disappointment with the education, however, in this case, the focus of discontent appears to originate from the perceived weaknesses and limitations regarding the arrangement of TE programmes rather than the students themselves.

Re-organisation of study path

Furthermore, several students referred to the re-organisation of study path i.e. changing school and/or specialty and study pace, as the reason for discontinuing their studies in compulsory school teacher education programmes in GU. For instance, one student claimed that *“I prefer natural science courses, which I realized later in the programme and have [therefore] decided to go for a programme in natural sciences [instead]”*. Another one stated that *“I switched to the same education programme, however, in Dalarna University, since I want to study at a distance”*. What is more, there was also a case where advice from student counsellor was sought before making a decision to discontinue one’s studies: i.e. *“I have talked to the student counsellor about this. We agreed that I shall try something else for a year before I report back and switch to the pre-school teacher education programme”*. All in all, this current theme stood out for its focus on the students themselves and their personal study preferences as the basis for departing from TE programmes in GU. Though student departure indicates the presence of a mismatch between the pupils’ needs and what GU offers, the language used in these examples does not tend to criticize the institution and its study plan, rather it looks for possibilities to realize student’s own preferences through the re-organisation of their study path.

Personal and work-related reasons

The last two themes voiced by students when departing from their studies were personal and work-related reasons. Regarding the former, students mainly referred to issues associated with health and motivation as well as relocation, indicating the reason for leaving to be e.g. *“Depression, anxiety problems, sleep disorders and concentration difficulties in connection with my depression”* or just *“Because of moving”*. One student claimed being *“too unmotivated to study in my current point of life, but interested in resuming education later in life”*. Another one echoed *“I feel that I want to work before I study. Don’t feel quite ready yet. Otherwise I am pleased with the programme and it is fun”*. Last but not least, regarding work-related reasons for discontinuing with studies, an example of receiving an unexpected job opportunity emerged from the data: i.e. *“I was previously trained as a journalist and got a job*

as a communicator at a short notice, which I decided to accept instead of starting studies in teacher education". To sum up this theme, there are some special (e.g. medical and motivational) personal reasons independent from the TE programme and higher education institution in general that come to play when making a decision to depart from one's studies. When it regards this kind of reasoning, the options of the higher education institution to enhance retention remain rather limited.

In conclusion, although the qualitative data used the current study is rather brief and does not allow to make specific connections between the scope of student departure reported above and the corresponding reasoning behind it (e.g. how would the reasons described relate to the different forms of student departure behaviour), it still provides an insight into the thought patterns students tend to convey when leaving their studies in a TE programme. In fact, the motives reported in this current research appeared to stem from either the arrangement and characteristics of the study programme as such or from the reasons pertained to the student him-/herself as a person. These results are in line with previous research, indicating the perceived poor student-institution fit (see Tinto, 1975, 1987) to be in the centre of pupil's decision to depart from their studies. As Georg (2009) argues, in the process of deciding to discontinue studies, the student firstly senses that either the university study in general, or the chosen subject in particular does not fit well with their personal preferences, which leads to feeling of dissatisfaction that in turn decreases their achieving motivation and consequent class attendance, and results in the reconsideration of study direction. Additionally, Carlhed's (2015) research confirms that all students who expressed uncertainty in their choice of subject did end up either changing the direction of their study path (i.e. transferring) or discontinuing their studies altogether, whereas those who considered themselves to be rather or very sure in their choice of subject tended to remain in the programme. Except when it regards the class attendance, a similar trail of thought as communicated in previous research can also be observed in the motives students reported for leaving compulsory school TE programmes in GU.

The effectiveness of the current application form for a non-completion of studies

When working with the data gathered through the current form for a non-completion of studies ("Avsägelse av studieplats (studieavbrott)," n.d.), a significant shortage of information was detected (see the description in the section "Data") as the result of the requirements set for filling out the form, i.e. answering (certain) questions being optional instead of compulsory. In the form of student answering patterns, an illustration of the effectiveness of the current application for a non-completion of studies shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Answering patterns from the current application form for a non-completion of studies in GU in the example of compulsory school teacher education programmes in the timeframe of 2011-2016.²⁴

TE programme	N ¹	TE ²	TE + expl.	TE + no expl.	OR ³	OR + expl.	OR + no expl.	No TE/OR ⁴	No TE/OR + expl.
0-3 rd grade	65	9	7	2	50	3	47	6	6
4-6 th grade	83	10	6	4	71	4	67	2	1
7-9 th grade	38	9	4	5	29	3	26	0	0
Total	186	28	17	11	150	10	140	8	7

¹ number of students that filled in the form for a non-completion of studies in respective programmes;

² number of students that reported teacher education programme itself to be reason for discontinuing studies (the following two columns show whether or not the student accompanied their answer with an explanation);

³ number of students that reported their reason for leaving to be due to “other reasons” (the following two columns show whether or not the student accompanied their answer with an explanation);

⁴ number of students that had chosen neither of the aforementioned options (the following column shows how many students had elaborated on their reason for discontinuing studies).

To begin with, when looking at Table 4, the prevalent answering pattern among the students can be detected. In fact, out of the total of 186 students that discontinued their studies in respective compulsory school teacher education programmes within the timeframe of 2011–2016, 150 students (i.e. 83.3%) claimed their motive for leaving to be due to “other reasons”, whereas only 28 students (i.e. 15.1%) stated their reason for leaving to be the TE programme itself. Another thing that can be noted from Table 4 is the presence of further explanations (or rather lack thereof) accompanying the abovementioned reasoning options. When students that reported their reason for discontinuing studies to be the TE programme itself (N=28) elaborated on their answer on 17 cases (i.e. 60.7% out of 28 students) and did not do so on 11 cases (i.e. 39.3% out of 28 students), pupils that reported their reason for leaving to be due to “other reasons” (N=150) explained their decision only on 10 cases (i.e. 6.7% out of 150) and gave no explanation on 140 cases (i.e. 93.3% out of 150). Hence, it can be concluded that regardless of the TE programme one studied on, students’ most popular answering pattern was to state their reason for leaving to be due to “other reasons” and not elaborate on it (i.e. 75.27% of 186 students did so), thus leaving GU without valuable information about students’ motives for departing from studies.

²⁴ The author is aware that the data referred to in Table 4 covers a larger sample than the specific student cohort of 2011, however, considering the significance of the shortage of information demonstrated in Table 4 regarding the reporting of reasons for departure in the current application for discontinuing studies, it seemed too valuable not to point out and was therefore included in the thesis.

Discussion

The scope of student departure

Firstly, when it regards the scope of student departure in the form of officially registered discontinuation (*studieavbrott*), the results of this current study appear to be in line with the OECD average (i.e. the average departure rate of 31%, compared to 28.4% among this sample), but remain somewhat lower than was observed in TE programmes in Uppsala University (Carlhed, 2015)²⁵. Concurrence with previous research can also be noted regarding students' choice of departure time, with the most popular time being during the first and the third semester which does fit the specification of between the first and the second year as noted by Barefoot (2004) and Hovdhaugen (2009, 2011). Furthermore, the results of this current research coincide with the findings of the Swedish Higher Education Authority (2016a) in that the discontinuation of studies is highest among subject teachers (*Ämneslärarprogrammet*) and 4-6th grade teachers, however, unlike their observation, in the case of this sample, more women departed from their studies than men.

How could GU benefit from knowing the patterns of students' discontinuation of studies in different TE programmes? For one, it provides a clear overview of the timeframe(s) when the risk for discontinuation is higher and thereby allows the institution to plan the potential intervention approaches accordingly. Another thing is that knowing the patterns of leaving from different TE programmes, helps the institution to prioritize the target group that needs intervention more urgently. For instance, in the case of this study, according to the official discontinuation rates, students from 7-9th and 4-6th grade TE programmes are discontinuing more compared to their peers from 0-3rd grade TE programme. If one also takes into account the proportion of the approved leave from studies and the so-called 'grey zone' students across the different TE programmes, the group that needs most urgent attention appears to be 7-9th grade teachers.

Furthermore, when it regards the temporary form of student departure, i.e. the approved leave from studies, the results of this current research indicate every fifth student (i.e. 21.1% out of 190 pupils) having taken it, with the most popular time being during the third and fifth semester, and the most prevalent duration 2 semesters. Whether this proportion is to be considered normal or not cannot be evaluated on the basis of this current research as the author could not find any corresponding quantitative research that would have given a basis for comparison. Moreover, as previously indicated, students' reasons for taking an approved leave of absence (as accounted for in HEO, 1993: 100, Chapter 7, § 33; UHRFS, 2013:3, § 3, 4, 5) are not identifiable via Ladok's data, however, some of the possible considerations are featured in Carlhed's (2015) interview study. These include using the break time as a buffer in order to (1) get back on track with the studies after having fallen behind, (2) contemplate over whether and how to proceed with one's study path, or (3) do something else for a change (e.g. study some other programme or work) (Carlhed, 2015, p. 41). Hence, in a way, granting students an approved leave of absence may be seen as beneficial practice

²⁵ Though, Carlhed (2015) does emphasize that the further investigation of the variety of study situations that get marked in student records' system as 'discontinuation' (*avbrott*) does decrease the actual dropout rates.

for keeping pupils in the education, since after having some rest, students may return to studies more motivated. On the other hand, allowing study breaks could also contribute to potential (permanent) student departure from a study programme. As the results of this research show, 15 students out of 40 that were granted an approved leave of absence did later on register an official discontinuation of studies.

What is more, when it regards transfer within GU, the results of this current study show it to be a rather popular path to take, with 44.4% of students that officially discontinued their studies in a TE programme proceeding within the same university and most of them even remaining in the same field of study (i.e. teaching). Hence, here, the flexibility of the HE system in Sweden that allows to transfer course credits easily and the fact that TE programmes share the same packet of pedagogical core courses (see Appendices 1–3), seems to be rather beneficial; despite possibly (although not always) extending the time period needed to complete a degree, it appears to help keep students in teacher education. Moreover, the results of this current research indicate transfer to be more popular among 7-9th and 4-6th grade teachers compared to 0-3rd grade teachers. Although all of these three programmes have a pre-set degree structure, limited number of elective courses and frequent examinations that according to Jansen (2004) should have a positive effect on student progression, the distribution of transfer as a form of departure behaviour across these TE programmes still remains different. However, as Berg (1997, as cited in Hovdhaugen, 2011) argues, being given many choices along the study path may prolong pupils' time to degree completion, and thereby also raise the risk of possible student departure. When comparing the respective TE programmes in that regard, it can be noted that 7-9th grade teachers, among whom transfer rate is highest, also have the longest programme duration as well as the highest number of possible subject combinations is available to them, compared to 0-3rd and 4-6th grade teachers. Hence, there might be some truth to that matter, although the availability of a larger array of choices alone probably cannot account for all the variance in transfer rates.

Lastly, in addition to changes in students' commitment and interest towards the subject of study, research also indicates the perceived imbalance between the investment into and the gain from studies to give grounds for considering departure (see the interview analysis in Carlhed, 2015). In the case of teacher education, the ordinary duration of studies is rather long, stretching from 6 to 10 semesters depending on the programme (see Table 1), whereas the salary one is going to be earning later in the job market is notably lower compared to that in other specialties requiring the same period of studies (Statistics Sweden, 2014, 2015). One could speculate that students in this current study, regardless of their form of departure behaviour, may have also shared the same thought pattern as their peers in Uppsala University, however, due to the lack of data, this cannot be claimed.

The 'grey zone' students

If transfer mostly tended to remain within TE, making the potential loss of prospective teachers through this form of student departure somewhat smaller, a theme that raises concern is the relatively large number of the so-called 'grey zone' students among the sample whose lasting inactivity over time may raise the proportion of student departure. From the author's

personal contact with a student counsellor at GU, it appeared that such situation may be the result of a system peculiarity (Lindberg, 2016). Namely, even if a student does not have an active registration in a course and is not on an approved leave of absence, (s)he cannot be regarded as having departed from studies unless an official application for declining his/her study position is registered (Lindberg, 2016). The author argues that in order for the registered discontinuation of studies to portray the reality accurately, this above described arrangement should be reconsidered and extended by, for example, setting a time limit on being idle and creating the possibility of getting in contact with the student as soon as possible once their presence in the so-called 'grey zone' has been detected (see the chapter "Implications on the basis of this research"). The latter would give the university more clarity about the actual student departure; for instance, via contacting the 'grey zone' students, the university may either get a confirmation on the fact that the student has indeed departed from their studies and thereby register an official discontinuation; or if the student is hesitant about the continuation of studies, the university may offer an opportunity to get study counselling in order to work out their personal study path.

Reasons for leaving

As previously indicated, the character of data received from the application form for a non-completion of studies did not allow to link up the quantitative profiles of the leavers with the reasoning behind their decision to leave. Nevertheless, the themes that did appear from the students' answers seemed to largely correspond to the previous research in the fact that the basis of the departure decision tended to be a perceived mismatch between the students' expectations, personal preferences and their actual experience in the TE programme. The differences, however, were noted in the focus of students' answers – some students concentrated on the perceived weaknesses and limitations regarding the arrangement of TE programme that did not conform to their expectations, while others, instead of criticizing the institution, focused on looking for possibilities to realize their personal preferences through, e.g. the re-organisation of their study path.

Furthermore, considering the above described, what could the university do to promote retention and decrease student departure? As Georg points out,

Since a tendency to drop out can be traced back above all to an inadequate fit between a decision influenced by personal characteristics, and institutional and social conditions, suitable measures would include interventions to create the preconditions for academic and social integration at the university. (Georg, 2009, p. 658)

Hence, in order to prevent poor institutional fit, promoting the correspondence between the students' expectations towards and the reality of the TE programme (in other words, creating realistic expectations) should be taken to the maximum, so that students' integration into the academic and social systems of the university would be as smooth as possible (Georg, 2009; Tinto, 1987). As Tinto (1987) denotes, there are several approaches an institution can use over the course of students' study path that may help the integration process. However, he

argues that whichever approach is eventually used, should follow certain set of principles: i.e. (1) be systematic and (2) student-centred, (3) emphasize the character and quality of learning, (3) start as early as possible, (4) ensure that new students have an opportunity to gain the skills needed for academic success; and (5) reach out to the students beyond the formal domains of academic life (Tinto, 1987, p. 138–140). Those principles are covered, for instance, in the new trial approach (UHRFS 2015:5) utilized in the admission of TE students in chosen universities in Sweden, where students get a chance to ask questions about the education programme and work market opportunities that are topical for them, while the admission committee obtains an overview of students' expectations and evaluates their eligibility for the TE programme (Callegari, 2016; See Appendix 6). Although, GU does not currently partake in this endeavour, it might be something to consider in the future admissions into teacher education so as to create suitable preconditions to advance and strengthen the student-institution fit from the very beginning of studies.

Conclusion

To sum up, by utilizing the information GU has about the student cohort admitted in autumn 2011, this current research set out to explore the possible emerging patterns regarding students' decision to depart from their studies in compulsory school TE programmes. It was a true cohort study where pupils were followed longitudinally (from autumn 2011 to autumn 2015), in order to give as accurate overview of the different forms of student departure behaviour as possible. As a result, some patterns were indeed observed regarding the timeframe, duration, reasoning behind and connections between different forms of student departure. In addition, an insight into the seriousness of the situation regarding the so-called 'grey zone' students was provided, and the effectiveness of the current form for the non-completion of studies was discussed. What can be concluded from this study is that in order to get a more accurate picture of the student departure situation in a HE institution, it is important to work out an effective way of identifying different forms of departure behaviour in the student records and linking these to the student-reported reasons. Some suggestions for improving the current praxis in GU are provided at the end of this thesis.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

To begin with, as the amount and nature of the information that could be obtained about the leaver from the content of the application for renouncing one's study position (*studieavbrott*) was rather poor and the application for an approved leave from studies (*studieuppehåll*) did not even include a question about the reasons behind one's decision, this current research remains rather superficial when answering the question about the reasons why students depart from their studies. Although, it does provide an insight into the themes students tended to communicate when leaving their studies in a TE programme, the future

research should strive for a better qualitative depth regarding the reasoning behind students' decision to depart. Hence, an interview study with the leavers as well as the stayers might be an appropriate approach to use in order to shed a more thorough light on this theme of interest. As Tinto points out, "leaving is not the mirror image of staying" (Tinto, 2006, p. 6) and therefore knowing why some students leave does not give a direct answer to why others persist. If it is the HE institution's intent to promote student retention and reduce departure, it needs to have an understanding of both perspectives. In addition, it might also be interesting to view teacher education in relation to other programmes offered in GU. For instance, there might be something characteristic to teacher education that enhances students' decision to leave compared to other programmes.

Another limitation that the author experienced when conducting this current research was the difficulty of getting access to data that stemmed from the regulations at GU. Namely, as mentioned in the "Data analysis" section, student records were provided by Ladok services in paper form – i.e. in total 868 pages of student information that had to be coded and manually entered into SPSS – instead of electronically. In addition to the environmental cost of printing this amount of paper, this service had to also be paid for by the author of this current thesis as the request for funding this endeavour was denied by GU. Therefore, although it would be possible to get information regarding changes in the study paths of this student cohort of interest during the last two semesters, this current research does not include data after March, 2016. All in all, it is the author's belief that the higher education institution, in this case, the University of Gothenburg, should be promoting research that strives to provide input for assessing and developing the effectiveness of different systems inside the institution, instead of hindering it. The author hopes that the future researchers would be more favoured when it regards being granted access to data for students doing their thesis work.

Implications on the basis of this research

On the basis of this current research, several implications can be made that may contribute into the effectiveness of future student data collection in GU.

To begin with, the author proposes to change/adjust the application form for a non-completion of studies (*studieavbrott*) in GU. As shown in the results' section of this thesis, the current form is ineffective for gathering meaningful (qualitative) data regarding students' reasons for leaving compulsory school teacher education programmes. One way to solve this problem would be by making it obligatory for students to elaborate on their reasons for leaving (hence, not giving an option to state "other reasons" and not give further explanation). The students would still get to choose what to write as an answer and how much to elaborate on their decision (based on the author's experience in this current thesis, the explanations students give tend to stay rather short), but this arrangement would provide GU with valuable information regarding students' decision to leave. Nevertheless, analysing these answers every year would take up time for the administrative staff of GU.

Alternatively, it would be useful and practical to change the aforementioned application form into a multiple-choice questionnaire. Namely, similarly to what has been

done in this current thesis, it is possible, on the basis of the answers LUN/SOL has so far received from the application for discontinuing studies (regardless of the TE programme and departure time), to find the themes reflecting the reasons students have generally tended to give. Those themes could in turn be used in the future version of the non-completion application and thus provide the university with more (quantitative) data regarding students' motives for departing their studies (e.g. which reasons are more topical than others).

In addition to the application for a non-completion of studies, GU might also consider recording the students' reasons for taking an approved leave from studies in the Ladok system. Since when it regards being guaranteed a study place in the programme, the university firstly considers students with special reasons (UHRFS, 2013:3, § 3,4,5; "Antagningsordning för utbildning på grundnivå och avancerad nivå," 2011: Chapter 9, 2014: Chapter 9, 2015: Chapter 9), and the presence of these reasons has to be proved by the student. Therefore, this information does exist somewhere in the university. Recording the reasons in Ladok would allow GU (and potential future researchers) to get an insight into the proportional distribution of them – e.g. it would enable an analysis of what are the more popular reasons for taking a study break, and stemming from that how could the university meet those reasons and promote students' return to their studies.

Another proposition from this current thesis is keeping records on the use of student counselling services in GU – e.g. keeping track of students' visits to the study counsellors (*studievägledning*). This would allow to follow up if the students that leave from their studies in a teacher education programme or decide to take a study break, have used the counselling services before their decision-making. Student counsellors are the part of university staff that due to the nature of their work may provide a deeper insight into the thought patterns behind students' decision-making when it regards the choices that determine the direction of their study path.

Last but not least, the current praxis rules at GU only allow to assign a non-completion of studies if a student has personally submitted an application for declining their study position, however, there are still many students that do not register their leave and thus become a part of the 'grey zone'. Regarding managing the 'grey zone' students, the author proposes setting a time limit on being idle. For instance, if a student has not been registered to any courses from their study programme for one semester, and has not registered an official discontinuation of studies nor a study break, they would be contacted in order to elaborate on the state of their studies. The university could even consider creating a reminder system that would automatically notify student counsellors and/or programme administrators responsible for respective TE programmes when a student fits the abovementioned criteria so that (s)he could be contacted promptly. Such system would improve the tracking and monitoring of students and thereby enable potential targeted interventions (e.g. study counselling) when the above described student's inactivity is detected (European Commission, 2015).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Curriculum for preschool class and 1-3rd grade teacher education programme for student cohort of 2011 in GU.

Year	1		2		3		4	
Semester	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Autumn/Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring
Period 1	Core course, theme 1	VFU 1	Sv	En	NO	XA1	Sv AN	Core course, theme 4 AN
	Core course, theme 2	Ma						VFU 5, AN
Period 2	Sv	VFU 2	Core course, theme 3	SO	VFU 4	Core course, theme 3	Ma AN	XA2 AN
		Core course, theme 1	VFU 3		Core course, theme 4	Core course, theme 2		

Abbreviations: Sv: Swedish; Ma: Maths; En: English; SO (*samhällsorienterade ämnen*): Social studies; NO (*naturorienterade ämnen och teknik*): Natural sciences and technology; VFU (*verksamhetsförlagd utbildning*): Pedagogical practice; XA: Thesis work; AN (*avancerad nivå*): Second cycle higher education. Every column in the table above corresponds to 30 ECTS of studies per semester.

Core courses in Educational Science:

Theme 1: Learning, development and didactics (*Lärande, utveckling och didaktik*)

Theme 2: Curriculum theory, organisation, follow-up and the analysis of learning and development (*Läroplansteori, organisation, uppföljning och analys av lärande och utveckling*)

Theme 3: Leadership, special pedagogy, social relationships and conflict management (*Ledarskap, specialpedagogik, sociala relationer och konflikthantering*)

Theme 4: Scientific theory and research methods, evaluation and development work (*Vetenskapsteori och forskningsmetodik, utvärdering och utvecklingsarbete*)

Source: Studiegång för Grundlärarprogrammet med inriktning mot arbete i förskoleklass och grundskolans årskurs 1–3. (2011). Göteborgs Universitet.

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Appendix 2: Curriculum for 4-6th grade teacher education programme for student cohort of 2011 in GU.

Year	1		2		3		4	
Semester	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Autumn/Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring
Period 1	Core course, theme 1	VFU 1 Ma	En	Optional course	VFU 4	Core course, theme 4	Sv AN	Core course, theme 4
	Core course, theme 2	VFU 2			Core course, theme 2	Core course, theme 3		Core course, theme 4 AN
Period 2	Sv	Ma	Core course, theme 3	Optional course	En	XA1	Ma AN	XA2
		Core course, theme 1	VFU 3					AN

Abbreviations: Sv: Swedish; Ma: Maths; En: English; VFU (*verksamhetsförlagd utbildning*): Pedagogical practice; XA: Thesis work; AN (*avancerad nivå*): Second cycle higher education. Every column in the table above corresponds to 30 ECTS of studies per semester.

Optional courses: Social studies, Natural sciences and technology, Art, Music, Sport and Health, or Home and Consumerism; Students have to choose one area from the aforementioned and pass courses in it corresponding to 30 higher education credits.

Core courses in Educational Science:

Theme 1: Learning, development and didactics (*Lärande, utveckling och didaktik*)

Theme 2: Curriculum theory, organisation, follow-up and the analysis of learning and development (*Läroplansteori, organisation, uppföljning och analys av lärande och utveckling*)

Theme 3: Leadership, special pedagogy, social relationships and conflict management (*Ledarskap, specialpedagogik, sociala relationer och konflikthantering*)

Theme 4: Scientific theory and research methods, evaluation and development work (*Vetenskapsteori och forskningsmetodik, utvärdering och utvecklingsarbete*)

Source: Studiegång för Grundlärarprogrammet med inriktning mot arbete i grundskolans årskurs 4–6. (2011). Göteborgs Universitet. Retrieved from http://lararutbildning.gu.se/digitalAssets/1423/1423651_studiegang_grund_ht11.pdf.

Appendix 3: Curriculum for 7-9th grade teacher education programme for student cohort of 2011 in GU.

Year	1		2		3		4		5
Semester	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Autumn/Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn	Spring	Autumn
Period 1	Core course, theme 1	SuD1	SuD1	SuD2	SuD2	SuD3	SuD3	SuD1 XA1	Core course, theme 3 AN
	Core course, theme 2	SuD1	SuD1	SuD2	SuD2	SuD3	SuD3		Core course, theme 4 AN
Period 2	VFU1	SuD1	VFU2	SuD2	VFU3	SuD3	SuD1 AN	VFU4 AN	SuD1 XA2 AN
	Core course, theme 1								

Abbreviations: SuD1: Main subject- and subject didactics' studies (a total of 90 ECTS); SuD2: Second subject- and subject didactics' studies (a total of 45 ECTS); SuD3: Third subject- and subject didactics' studies (a total of 90 ECTS); VFU (*verksamhetsförlagd utbildning*): Pedagogical practice; XA: Thesis work; AN (*avancerad nivå*): Second cycle higher education. Every column in the table above corresponds to 30 ECTS of studies per semester.

Core courses in Educational Science:

Theme 1: Learning, development and didactics (*Lärande, utveckling och didaktik*)

Theme 2: Curriculum theory, organisation, follow-up and the analysis of learning and development (*Läroplansteori, organisation, uppföljning och analys av lärande och utveckling*)

Theme 3: Leadership, special pedagogy, social relationships and conflict management (*Ledarskap, specialpedagogik, sociala relationer och konflikthantering*)

Theme 4: Scientific theory and research methods, evaluation and development work (*Vetenskapsteori och forskningsmetodik, utvärdering och utvecklingsarbete*)

Source: Studiegång för Ämneslärarprogrammet med inriktning mot arbete i grundskolans årskurs 7–9. (2011). Göteborgs Universitet. Retrieved from http://lararutbildning.gu.se/digitalAssets/1357/1357432_studiegang_amnes_ht11.pdf.

Appendix 4: Teaching qualification according to teaching degrees obtained in the GU.

	Grade/School level	Pre-school	Leisure-time home	Pre-school class	1-3 rd grade	4-6 th grade	7-9 th grade	Upper Secondary school
Teaching degree	Pre-school teacher	X		X				
	Extended School pedagogue		X	One of the subjects: Bd, Hk, Id, Mu	One of the subjects: Bd, Hk, Id, Mu			
	Primary school 0-3 rd grade			X	En, Ma, NO, SO, Sv			
	Primary school 4-6 th grade				3 rd grade in subjects: En, Ma, Sv + one of the selected subjects (in grade 3, No, or So, alternatively in 1-3 rd grade Bd, Id or Mu)	Subjects En, Ma, Sv + one of the selected subjects Bd, Id, Mu, NO, SO		
	Lower Secondary school 7-9 th grade (including KPU)				Bd, Hk, Id, ModL, Mu, Sl	All subjects included in the degree	All subjects included in the degree	Subjects one has studied for 90 ECTS, with the exception of Mu, Sh and Sv where 120 ECTS are expected
	Upper Secondary school 1-3 rd grade (including KPU)				Bd, Id, Mu	Bd, Id, Mu	All subjects included in the degree that are taught in 7-9 th grade	All subjects included in the degree
	Vocational Education Teacher Training							All subjects included in the degree

Abbreviations: Bd (*Bild*): Art; Hk (*Hem och konsumentkunskap*): Home and consumer studies; En: English; Maths (Ma); Sv: Swedish; Id (*Idrott och hälsa*): Sport and health; ModL (*moderna språk*): Modern languages (i.e., French, Spanish, German); Mu: Music; NO (*naturorienterade ämnen och teknik*): Natural sciences and technology; Sl (*Slöjd*): (handi)craft; SO (*samhällsorienterade ämnen*): Social studies; KPU (*kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning*): the complementary pedagogical education.

Note: When it comes to subject teacher education programmes, the students themselves choose the subjects that make up their eventual teaching degree. In addition to the school levels indicated above, a person holding a pre-school and/or a school teacher degree is also qualified to teach adult education in the respective levels and subjects.

Source: Var får du undervisa?. (2016). Göteborgs Universitet. Retrieved from <http://lararutbildning.gu.se/utbildning/grundlararprogrammet/var-far-du-undervisa-> .

Appendix 5: Alternative paths for obtaining a teaching degree from GU.

In addition to the compulsory school teacher education programmes covered in this current thesis, there are also several other, alternative paths for obtaining a teaching degree from Gothenburg University.

To begin with, **the complementary pedagogical education** (in Swedish, *Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning*, KPU) is a short pedagogical training programme for those who have studied one or more subjects on the higher education level before and want to become a certified teacher in Sweden (“Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning (KPU), 90 hp.,” 2016). In GU, the focus in this programme is on subjects that suffer from the biggest teacher shortage in secondary school. This programme includes core courses in educational sciences (*utbildningsvetenskaplig kärna*) and pedagogical practice (VFU, 30 ECTS). Moreover, the programme begins in Spring term and GU offers 2 options for study arrangement: (1) the usual version of the programme (*ordinarie*) runs 3 semesters (thus, 1.5 years) with a study pace of 100%, whereas the alternative arrangement entails a study pace of 125% and includes taking courses during the summer (hence, in total 1 year). There are 2 possible certification outputs one can apply for: (1) 7-9th grade subject teacher in one or two subjects where the first choice presumes one has studied the relevant subject in the extent of 90 ECTS, whilst the other requires an extra of 45 ECTS studies in the second subject one intends to teach; or (2) the upper secondary school teacher in one subject where one is expected to have studied at least 120 ECTS worth of courses (“Kompletterande pedagogisk utbildning (KPU), 90 hp.,” 2016).

Secondly, **the foreign teacher training programme** (“Utländska lärares vidareutbildning,” 2015) is aimed at teachers that have obtained a teaching degree abroad but want to be able to work as a teacher in Sweden. Altogether there are six higher education institutions offering this programme: i.e. the Universities of Gothenburg, Stockholm, Linköping, Umeå, Örebro and Malmö. The prerequisites for admission to the programme are Swedish language proficiency corresponding to the upper secondary school level (hence, one must have graduated from the course Swedish as a second language 3; SAS3 – *Svenska som andra språk 3*), and at least a 2-year teaching degree from a higher education institution abroad. An individual study plan is created for each student in the ULV-programme as the duration of the programme varies according to the extent of students’ previous education and professional experience, however, the maximum length of studies stretches up to 120 ECTS, which corresponds to 4 terms of full-time studies (“Utländska lärares vidareutbildning,” 2015). The ULV-programme was started in 2007 and has thus far accommodated students with foreign background from over 90 different countries and more than 40 native languages. The institution responsible for the national coordination of the ULV-programme is Stockholm University (“Utländska lärares vidareutbildning (ULV),” n.d.).

Last but not least, **the teacher training programme to teachers without a teaching degree** (see, “Vidareutbildning av lärare som saknar lärarexamen.,” 2015; VAL), as the name implies, is aimed at active teachers (who have worked for at least 2 consecutive years with a relevant school level and subject) in pursuit of completing their teaching degree. Another

requirement is that the applicant must be able to reach a teaching degree with 120 ECTS worth of studies (“Vidareutbildning av lärare som saknar lärarexamen.,” 2015). The VAL-programme provides students with personal study plans and allows part-time studies with the possibility of extending one’s studies up to 4 years (i.e. studying pace at 25%). Currently, there are 8 higher education institutions in Sweden offering the teacher training programme to teachers without a teaching degree: i.e. the Universities of Gothenburg, Umeå, Dalarna, Jönköping, Karlstad, Linköping, Malmö and Stockholm. The national coordinator of the VAL-programme in Sweden is Umeå University (“Vidareutbildning av lärare som saknar lärarexamen.,” 2015). GU offers the VAL-programme for compulsory as well as upper secondary school teachers (i.e. subject teachers; more specifically teachers of dance, theatre, drama and sports; though, even other subject combinations are possible), but not for pre-school nor vocational education teachers (“Vidareutbildning av lärare som saknar lärarexamen.,” 2015).

Appendix 6. The experience of Jönköping University in utilizing the trial approach proposed by UHR in the admission process to teacher education programmes in autumn 2016.

The following is an overview of a correspondence between the author of this current thesis and the Senior Faculty Administrator at the School of Education and Communication at Jönköping University, Fausto Callegari.

How was the students' eligibility for teacher education tested in JU in autumn 2016?

I HLK:s försöksmodell ingick tre moment; kortfattad personlig bakgrundsbeskrivning (syfte: underlag för intervjun), skriftlig reflektion utifrån en på förhand vald text med koppling till yrket (syfte: underlag för bedömning av reflektionsförmågan och förmågan att kommunicera i skriftlig form samt enskild 20-minutersintervju med 3 bedömare, 2 lärarutbildare och en yrkesverksam lärare (syfte: underlag för bedömning av den sökandes förmåga att; 1. Kommunicera, 2. Interagera, 3. Självreflektera, 4. Inta en ledarroll och 5. Motivation för yrkesvalet). Dessa fem förmågor, som i förarbetet till projektet mejslats fram som generella förmågor för lärare (oavsett undervisningsstadiet), låg till grund försöksmodellens utformning.

What were the results compared to the admission process that has been used thus far? (e.g. did JU have more or less applicants to teacher education than earlier?)

Sökandesiffrorna till förskolläraryrket minskade 2016 jämfört med åren 2013-2015 från 821 till 686 men det går inte att med säkerhet uttala sig om att det helt beror på lämplighetsbedömningen. Det får utvärderingen, som blir klar hösten 2017, utvisa. När det gäller söksiffrorna till ämnesläraryrket (enbart inriktning Hi, RE och SH omfattades av försöket) kan vi inte se någon större skillnad mellan 2015 och 2016 (att vi endast kan gå tillbaka till 2015 -års siffror beror på att det var först 2015 som dessa inriktningar kunde erbjudas vid HLK). Av samtliga 1012 sökande till både förskolläraryrket och ämnesläraryrket, genomförde ca 1/3 lämplighetsprövningen. Ca hälften svarade inte alls på den information som tillskrevs alla sökande trots att det i information särskilt trycktes på att om de inte svarade på kallelsen till den obligatoriska lämplighetsbedömningen, skulle de strykas som sökande till programmen (men då enbart till HLK:s program. Om de även sökt till andra lärosäten, stod de kvar som sökanden till deras program). Ett antagande vi utgår ifrån, men som ännu inte är bekräftat, är att lämplighetsbedömningen i sig haft en viss sållande funktion. Detta grundar vi på att de totalt 307 som fullt ut genomförde lämplighetsbedömningen, genomgående bedömdes som både motiverade och medvetna över sina val av program.

What was the feedback from the applicants and teaching staff to this new arrangement?

Vi, tillsammans med UHR, som är projektägaren, håller som bäst på att samla in och bearbeta data från både medverkande sökande, sökande som valt av avstå, sökande som inte svarade samt de ca 70 bedömare som deltog. Det som vi redan nu kan säga, är att en majoritet av både

sökande och medverkande bedömare, uttalar sig positivt till det lämplighetsförsök de medverkat i.

Which teacher education programmes did participate?

- Förskolläraryrket
- Ämnesläraryrket med inriktning mot gymnasieskolan – Hi
- Ämnesläraryrket med inriktning mot gymnasieskolan – Re
- Ämnesläraryrket med inriktning mot gymnasieskolan – Sh

What do you see as advantages and disadvantages of this trial arrangement regarding evaluation students' eligibility for teacher education?

Den främsta fördelen vi ser är det möte som uppstår vid intervjutillfället. Det gynnade såväl de sökande som bedömarna. De sökande genom att de fick och tog intervjutillfället i anspråk för att ställa de frågor kring yrket och programvalet som de funderat på men inte blivit kommunicerade och besvarade och bedömarna, som fick en tydligare bild av den sökandes bevekelsegrunder för sin ansökan och hans föreställningar av läraryrket. Grundtanken med hela försöket var nämligen att det skulle pröva den sökandes lämplighet för läraryrket. Den största nackdelen är att genomförande är både kostnads- och resurskrävande. Men, som våra kollegor i Finland och Skottland, som båda har lång tidigare erfarenhet av lämplighetsprövning, uttryckte det; It worths it!